Seeking Life

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SEEKING LIFE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE

RT. REV. PHILLIPS BROOKS, D.D.

Late Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts

TENTH SERIES

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY

31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

1904

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by
E. P. DUTTON & CO.

Published, September, 1904

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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PREFACE.

WITH this volume the publication of the sermons of Bishop Brooks closes. His friends think it is better to stop somewhat short of exhausting the best of the material in their hands than to run any risk of including that which, however good in itself, must still be counted the second-best of Phillips Brooks, for no man can invariably reach to the height of his own standard of attainment. The series, as a whole, comprises sermons written in the various periods of his youth, growth, and maturity, and is representative of every quality that made him the great preacher of his day, listened to with keen interest and affectionate admiration, both at home and abroad. As a contribution to the forces that make for righteousness in the world, their value is inestimable; and their welcome by Christians of every name, by all who feel that the only worthy life is made up of love to God and service to man, is sure to be eager and cordial.

Of the unpublished sermons many were written for special occasions, and therefore are not of interest to the general reader. Large portions of others have been included in various compilations; and it is intended to make a second volume of Lenten Readings, uniform with that entitled *The More Abundant Life*, from such portions of the remainder as are suited to the purpose.

W. M. L. J.

NEW YORK, June, 1904.

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SEEKING LIFE.

I.

SEEKING LIFE.

"For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live."—AMOS v. 4.

THESE are Old Testament words, and the Old Testament is everywhere a preparation and anticipation of the New. Its promises are types of better things which men had not yet learned to desire, but for which they were made ready by the clear, tangible benefits which were put at once into their possession. You want to prepare a child to receive from you the most spiritual blessings. You want to give him courage, patience, truth. You want to win him to Christ. But how can you begin? It may be—and it is perfectly legitimate if it is frankly done—it may be that you have to gain his confidence by giving him at once the things which he can understand, shelter and food and clothes and playthings. Then, when he trusts you and knows that you mean his good, you may go on and give him the far more precious spiritual gifts.

Now, these two treatments are really the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament gave the people Moses, who led them out of a bodily slavery in Egypt into a physical plenty and luxuriance in Canaan. If they had really been won by that mercy into confidence in and love for God, they would have been ready for the larger gift when the New Testament offered them Christ, the spiritual Deliverer who came to lead them out of the slavery of sin into the freedom and joy of holiness. This is the simplest of all the relations between the outward and visible mercies of God, on one hand, and the inward and spiritual mercies on the other—that the visible mercies are given us to win our confidence, so that He can give us the spiritual mercies. With this idea clearly in our minds, we can often see issuing from it glimpses of light upon the dark parts of God's treatment of us—why this mercy was given us when we seemed so undeserving, and why that other was snatched away when we were making only a sensual and selfish use of it.

These words of Amos, then, out of the Old Testament, probably had at first their purely physical application: "Thus saith the Lord, Seek ye me, and ye shall live." It was that promise of long life, as a reward of obedience, which is heard all through the older Dispensation. That promise had met Abraham at his first calling. It had been repeated in the ears of all the Patriarchs. It had dropped in continual reiteration of encouragement and warning upon all the various conditions of that ever-changing Jewish history: "Be obedient, and

you shall live. Break my laws, and you shall die."

There was great truth and reality in that old Jewish motive. We know how many men distrust it now, how many men are wholly unable to believe that there is any connection between the length of men's lives and their faithful keeping of God's laws. And yet it is very strange that while, on one side, men it seems are learning to doubt this more and more; at the same time, on another side, men are coming to believe it as their fathers never did. In tracing the connection with fearful clearness between disease and vice, in showing how the evils which men have assigned to chance or fate come really from the violation of natural laws, in every new connection which is traced between the welfare of the physical frame and the moralities, such as sobriety, purity, peace,—in all these departments where our modern spirit is so busy, we are really gathering a new and mighty emphasis into the old words of God to the house of Israel: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live." We may be stopping short-sightedly in second causes, and talking of "laws of nature" rather than of "God," but this belief, which is growing stronger and stronger,—that moral character and physical well-being have to do with one another,—must finally break through everything between, and find the real cause of such a connection in a personal God, whom to obey is to live, whom to disobey is to die.

But now let us take the New Testament meaning of this Old Testament promise. When God told

His people that they should have long lives, that their bodies should be so strong and vigorous that they should last out many years—that was a great promise in itself. Physical life is good. To see the sun, to tread the earth, to feel life singing through our veins is very good; we feel it so. But man, when he is at his best, and God, who always is at His best, alike refuse to think of this physical life as final. At its highest height it means something higher than itself. Both as type and as instrument, the body in its best health stands for the healthy soul behind it. All that we say of the body may be said of the soul as well. It, too, lives and dies, is sick or healthy, suffers and enjoys, grows and decays. And when we are truly sensible of the superior value of the soul, we are ready to take every new gift of strength that God gives the body, as a token from Him that He means the soul to be strong. So the New Testament correspondent of the Old Testament promise of physical life, is spiritual life, the soul's life.

We know what is meant by a live soul. The young people who are listening to me have begun perhaps to discover already how much of their souls there is that is really not alive, to feel how impeded and restrained they are. Those of you who are older know the long struggle against spiritual deadness only too well. Perhaps you have given it up in despair, and have thrown forward into the other world all the hope that you have yet left of spiritual life. "When I get there, then I shall live," you say. The life of the soul means the perfectly free

and healthy action of all its powers on every side. When we get sight of that, when we hear that promise in its words, then the Old Testament offer, "Seek me, and your soul shall live," has turned into the New Testament invitation, "He that hath the Son hath Life." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

So far we have been trying to see what, in the deepest sense, it really is to live. But we want to understand also what it is to "seek the Lord," which is declared to be the condition of true life. When we know that, we shall be ready to bind the two together and understand the whole. What is it, then, to seek anything which is a condition of life? I suppose it is to put one's self into sympathy or harmony with that thing and its processes, so that we shall not work against it, but work with it, and be always carried along by its currents to our best results.

Take one or two universal illustrations of this idea. We are all beings living in the midst of nature. Natural forces in immense variety are all around us. They are working ceaselessly either to build up or to destroy our human life. Whether they build us or destroy us depends upon how we relate ourselves to them. If we are willing to study them and obey them, to find the nature of fire, water, air, and treat them in conformity with their natures, then they are our servants and we live by them. If we disregard their natures, and let our lives run across their processes at random, how soon they sweep us aside and kill us! The fire burns us

or the water drowns us ruthlessly. They are not life, but death, to us.

When one has learnt all this, when he has seen how positive and imperious, how jealous Nature is, how ready to help us, but how determined that it must be in her own way, well may he hear Nature crying out to him and all his human brethren, "Seek me, and ye shall live." With all her myriad voices she implores men to understand her, so that they may intelligently suit their lives to her, and draw her richness from her thousand breasts: "I want to help and feed you, but I cannot if you will not seek me, bending your intelligence and your will to me." What has made the difference between your civilized house and the hut of the savage? It is not wholly, but in part it is, that man has intelligently sought nature, and so has lived more fully. He has learnt the nature of wood and stone and clay and iron, and has overcome them all by yielding to them, in the course of the ages that lie between the mansion and the wigwam.

Or, again, we are all living under a fixed government and certain laws. Our national life and social life have running through them certain great shafts of law, to which everything must be bound. Those laws have life and death within them. By them the rich life of our most perfect household is protected; by them our noblest citizen has been led on to the influence which he enjoys; and by them the poor wretch who was condemned for murder yesterday must lose his life. We love the laws and all the deeper principles of right and wrong that lie below

them; we love them and we live in them, and all our life enlarges. We put ourselves into the attitude of obedience, and every little statute on the books becomes the ally of our living. Or, we grow obstinate and wilful, and every slightest law, every small conventionality, is up against us and will not rest till we are hunted down. The strong wind of righteousness blows across the world. If we will walk with it, it all helps us. If we will walk against it, every little zephyr in it becomes our enemy and buffets us. What has made the difference between the well-esteemed citizen who has justly won his fellow-men's honor, and your poor outcast and vagabond who has won every man's contempt or, at the best, his pity? Is it not that one has worked with the laws all his life, and the other has worked with the law in his face all the way? When we see how clear and positive all this is, we can hear all the laws—first the great solemn tones of the fundamental moral law, the law of right and wrong, speaking behind all; and then the chorus of its children, all the special statutes to which the moral law has given birth—calling together in our ears, "'Seek me, and ye shall live.' Understand me and obey me; so only in a law-governed world can men's lives come to their best."

Or, once more, the same is true of humankind. We get a large part of the stimulus of our life from one another. The most seemingly self-dependent of us has not all his springs in himself. He draws much of his best subterraneously from his neighbors. But how do we get life from one another?

Is it by sympathy or by antagonism? Is it by intelligence or misconception? Ah, you must know how dry and fruitless your best friend was to you until you really understood him. His acts, which now are all full of inspiration for you, were dead enough until you saw the soul with which he did them. His words, which now fire your enthusiasm, were cold as ice until you knew the friendly heart they sprang from. You know another man, perhaps, who does not comprehend this inspiring friend of yours. He is always coming up the stream, always coming into hostile contact with him. When he meets your friend, he is not stimulated to his best, as you are, but crushed into stupidity or exasperated into rudeness. You feel that it is better for them not to meet. What is the difference? Are you not sure that it is a lack of sympathy? Your friend cannot give himself to one who will not come to him. To you he gives himself more and more. "Seek me, and you shall live," he is always crying to you. "I sought him, and did live" seems to you, as you look back, to tell all the story of your life with him.

Some men are naturally and always seekers, in the sense which I have tried to make plain by all these illustrations. I do not mean that they are always writhing and struggling after some new thing, but they are ready and quick of sympathy, and so they enter freely into relations with people and things, and get the best out of everything. They are not suspicious. They have largeness and spirituality. They see what people and things are trying to do. They discern which way the most sluggish-

looking stream is really running; and, quickly sympathizing with its movement, they gain its stimulus. Seeking everything with instinctive sympathy, they seem to live by everything. All things make contribution to their lives. For them birds sing and breezes blow The laws of the State, the forces of Society, seem to work for their good. And everywhere that they go, the taste, the culture, the vitality, the character of the men whom they meet, seems to be brought out instantly and shared with them. Men, women, and children help them. So they put everything under tribute, not by exacting demands, but by the cordial way with which they enter into the life of everything and get its movement, as a man gets the movement of the stream on which he floats.

But we must leave our illustrations and go on. The world is not ultimately governed by either of these forces of which we have been speaking—by natural forces, by law, or by man. Behind them all, under them all, is God. It is beautiful to look abroad and see how everywhere men, sure that they had not got to the end of things until they found Him, have always pushed on through everything that stood between, and discovered God at last. Nature has seemed to men shallow unless His will was in it. Law has seemed artificial unless it issued from His nature. Man has seemed unaccountable save as His child. And so we all feel God behind the whole. No doubt we feel Him very differently. The boy's heart leaps with one movement at His discovered presence, and the old man's with another.

One soul discovers Him in the blueness of the peaceful sky, and another sees His fire burn down in the red chasm of a sin's punishment; but most wonderful of all things in the world is this endless pressure of all souls backward, this refusal to be satisfied until we find God.

And when God once has been discovered, there must be one purpose for a man who wants to live his fullest life that will overtop every other purpose. And that purpose must be to attain the most perfect sympathy and co-operation with God. If by deep sympathy with nature we get her life; if by understanding the law and obeying it, we make it build us up to our best; if by knowing and co-operating with a man we share his goodness and vitality; what then of God? If we can understand and obey and sympathize with and co-operate with Him, then in the same way, His life shall be our life, we shall live by Him; in one word, if we seek Him, we shall truly live.

"Seek Him"—have we not found out something of what that deep word means? It is the living in His sympathy, to love His loves and hate His hates, to think His thoughts after Him, to see the working out of His purposes and make them our own, and to rejoice if we can put a finger's strength to their fulfilment,—this is to seek God. And He who does this gets God's life. He seeks God, and he lives.

I am anxious to make the seeking of God appear to be this profound and thorough thing, because so often, as I think, the enfeeblement of religion has

come in just here,—by making the search after God seem something different from this. Ah, my dear friends, it is not seeking God's favor; it is seeking God Himself. It is not hurrying to Him with sins to be forgiven, merely because it is not safe to stay away. The search after forgiveness is a noble thing, but only noble as behind it there abides a deep dissatisfaction with our absence from the Lord, and an eager impatience with the wickedness that stands between our souls and Him. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near,"—what is the warning that is given there? What is the danger that is threatened in those oft-quoted words? Is it that if we do not ask forgiveness, some day God will be angry and say, "I will not give you forgiveness now, no matter how you beg"? Is it not—and is not that far more terrible?—that if we will not bind our life to His life, some day our life shall die out in all its best parts; that the perception and power of holiness will leave us; that God will carry on His great and beautiful purposes, and we shall have no part in them; that we shall miss all the best that we might be, because we would not try to love and be like Him by whom only we can be our best? This, this is the dreadful death that must come if we do not seek God.

And so, assuredly, this must be what is meant by the work of Christ in reconciling man to God, His making peace between man and God. If He did this, if by His life and death He made it more possible, not for mankind in the aggregate, but for every man, for you and me, to enter into such sympathy

with God, and so understand and work with Him that our souls should be filled with His life,—then is not His spiritual mediatorship clear? As plainly as if I saw Him standing there, a mighty Figure with one hand taking glowing motives and infinite ambitions like burning coals off the altar that stands before God's throne, and with the other touching those coals to the lips of a man and sending their power into his heart,—so plainly stands Jesus Christ between man and God; not separating them, but bringing them close together; interpreting God to man, that so man may be filled with God.

What does Mary Magdalen know about God? What does she care about the way He works? But Jesus Christ comes, and see how merciful He is, how true, how pure! Burning in every act He does, she sees one great desire, one hunger after holiness for Himself and for His brethren. She sees that and understands it; she is taken possession of by it. And then Jesus just turns to her and says: "That is God. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Let that new craving grow; seek Him more and more earnestly, and more and more you shall be purified. His new life in you shall cast your old life out." What a mediatorship was there! And when you cannot find God, and the Saviour shows Him to you; when you cannot tell which way the Father is walking, and the Son comes and points Him out to you and says, "There!" so that you can run after Him with every perception of duty just as clear as sunlight,—then Christ is *your* Mediator.

The perfect illustration of our text is in the life of Jesus Himself. He sought God, and He lived. We must know far more than we do of the mysterious separation which the Incarnation brought between the Father and the Son, before we can understand what it was for the Son to "seek" the Father; but all through the Gospels there is something to which we cannot give any other name. Jesus is seeking God, reaching after complete sympathy, understanding the eternal purposes and rejoicing to work with them, coming near to His Father, and getting from that seeking all the wonderful, unceasing, beautiful inflow of life that filled His whole career. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," was His story of the whole.

More important than all our attempts to define the relations of the Eternal Son and the Eternal Father, I think, it is to apprehend this perfect oneness of their thoughts and plans, which made all the life of the Father the life of the Son, too. Sometimes this seeking of God by Jesus takes a special utterance. Christ spends the whole night on a mountain, or by the passover table, or from the cross prays God to make His way more clear and show Himself to Him more perfectly. They are most touching utterances, but even in them we hardly find such an impression as gathers in us from frequent reading of the Gospels—that Christ was always pressing His life closer to God's life, finding out more and more what were God's purposes, giving Himself to those purposes more and more completely, and so more and more deeply living by

God. It comes from many little intimations, but it leaves with us the perfect picture of a soul always in deepening sympathy with God, and so always more and more thoroughly alive, but never so alive as when the death of the body set it free for perfect union with Divinity.

Have we not then come to something clear about this whole command, or let us better call it this invitation of God? God is the Father and Governor of life. If through a childlike love and obedience we enter into His sympathy, and catch His meanings, and are helping in any humble way towards His results; then our best powers of life come forth and do their work, and we genuinely live. All this is warmed into a glorious and inspiring promise as God calls to us, "Seek ye me, and live."

There are a few simple inferences to be drawn from all this, about the character of the Christian life which, I hope, may be of use to some. The first is, that the Christian life will be a gradual thing, and that we ought not to be surprised if it is slow. That very word, "seek"—think how it sounds. There is no suddenness about it. It does not describe a leap which carries one instantly from the ground below to the battlements above; it has a sound of perseverance, it makes us think of men deep underground digging for treasures, or of ships out at sea beating week after week towards their harbor, or of students growing gray over their books in tracing the long obscure lines that lead toward the truth. Certainly it has no promise of complete,

immediate attainment. And there are many of us, and many passages in the experience of all of us, when, conscious of the gradualness of our new life, earnestly resolved to persevere unto the end,—nay, meeting encouragement along the way and humbly certain that God is showing Himself to us more and more, but still wondering why it is so slow, missing the sudden leap to peace and perfectness which, it may be, we expected,—at such times that word "seek" falls on us like a benediction with its prophecy of gradualness, its encouragement to perseverance, and its promise of success. If it is the benediction that we need, let us take it to-day!

Another inference will be that we shall find the tests and satisfactions of our service of God in our common experiences, in the deepening of our most common days. The life that is to be given to us is no supernal thing that cannot be recognised except in the new light of another world. It is the bringing out of these familiar powers, the endowment of our common relationships with profoundness and sanctity. If you seek God, then, what may you expect? First of all, most of all, that the simplest things which have seemed shallow to you will grow deep and sacred. It is like taking a northern seed down into the tropics; what does it mean to it? You plant it there, and in that richer ground, under that gorgeous sun, see how it grows into a luxuriance that was hardly hinted by the meagreness of the fruitage which it yielded on the rocky, windy New England hillside. Or, it is like stooping and lifting under water a weight, with all the water's buoyancy

to help you. You have been trying to do your work as father, mother, brother, sister, schoolboy, clerk, merchant, citizen, from lower motives, from self-interest or mere good-nature. But if you begin to seek God through Christ, you throw your life into His life and all these things mean more to you; they change their look and are more sacred. The drudgery and tiresomeness drop out of them. They are His service. As different as an orange-tree struggling for life here and getting to nothing after all but poor green fruit, and an orange-tree under its own southern sky, is the duty of home-life done for one's own self, and that done for God.

Ah! it is good to look far off and see the heaven where we are to live some day, to catch the vision of its golden pinnacles and hear some strain of its music wafted to us from far away; but it is better still to see this present made glorious by present grace, to find these streets of duty turned to gold, and these words of thanksgiving setting themselves to music. That is a surer witness still that we are God's.

Another power of this invitation will be the motive it will give you to get rid of sin. The reason why men do not think their sins are very bad is, that they are not trying to be very good. But if you are really trying to be like God, then everything that keeps you from Him will declare its wickedness. That is the way, poor trifler, to make your trifling show its sinfulness! Do not sit contemplating your own poor foolish actions, your self-indulgences, your wastings and murderings of time, saying of each of

them, "There is no harm in this, or this, or this." Look away from them; look at God. Gaze till your soul is full upon the glory of His nature and His life. Then take in the idea that you have some part of His nature, and He has called you to share His life. Realize that it is possible for you to understand Him, and to work for what He is working for. Think what your life would be if you did that. Fill your soul with such a prospect; then turn back suddenly and see the idleness, the dissipation, the miserable self-indulgence, which are keeping you from living that life; and then ask yourself if there is no harm in it, ask yourself if it is not wicked. There is the place for you to see your sin, against what your sin hinders. Perhaps that also is the way for you to hate your sin, and conquer it and escape from its slavery forever.

No one can doubt what is the true time for this seeking of God. It may come at the very end of life. Just when the stream is almost dry, when, having run for years over the sandy ground of selfishness, it has only a few drops left of vital will, those few drops, we doubt not, may be taken up and poured into the great current of God's life. And that great current will not cast them out; it will treasure them, no doubt, and carry them on to some success. The dying man may be swept into the stream of God, and just as he dies begin to live. Of that we feel sure. We love to think of what the other world may have in store for such lives as the penitent thief's,—lives whose dying was the

beginning of their living. But we never think of such lives as more than exceptions. They are poor makeshifts after all. It is for such as you, my dear friends, young men and women with a full, fresh life to give, that giving the life to God really means something great and beautiful.

Think what it means. To take all these powers that are just opened or just opening, and say: "All these shall be used for doing not what I want, but what God wants. If my wants and His wants disagree, I will defeat myself to serve Him until, as I grow like Him, my wants and His wants come to be the same, and thenceforth I shall serve myself in serving Him. This I will do because He is my Father, and has shown me His love by Jesus Christ, my Lord."

O my dear friends, that is Salvation. That is to be saved—to give the life while it is rich and vigorous and young to God. Then it need not run weak and shallow at first, and only at last be refreshed; it may grow stronger and deeper all the way from the beginning, flowing in the ever-deepening channels of His love here, until it is received into the ocean of His love hereafter.

II.

THE CHILD'S LEADERSHIP.

"And a little child shall lead them."—ISAIAH xi. 6.

THESE words are part of the prophecy of millennial peace. Under the rod which is to come out of the stem of Jesse and the branch that is to grow out of his roots, "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." It is to be a peace under the control of the gentlest and most benignant of human powers. It is to be man in his simplest, his least elaborate, his most unsophisticated existence; man not artificial and complicated, but man in his intrinsic humanness; man with those principles and impulses that belong to his humanity; man in the form of a little child, that is to be the leader and harmonizer of the world.

It is with this idea that we will consider the text. We need not cling too closely to the literal words and circumstances. The leadership of the little child, which is to be the millennial condition, may represent for us the dominion of those primary and fundamental impulses, those simplest principles and powers of life, to which men are often so unwilling

to submit; but in submission to which all the best life comes, in submission to which alone the complete life of man can ever come. I want to plead for the power of the primary and simple emotions, and to try to show how they lead up to the highest and most religious life. As society becomes complicated, as ideas become subtle and refined, there is always a tendency to abjure the simplest masters, and to establish other standards which are artificial.

Here is really the test of the difference between the truly and the falsely cultivated man. The truly cultivated man has had the first healthy instincts of humanity developed and enriched by all his culture, but not altered in their character, made, on the contrary, all the more truly themselves as their character has been brought out. Such primary emotions as the love of family, the love of country, the love of fellow-man, the love of God—the domestic, the patriotic, the philanthropic, the religious emotions—have been purified and steadied and deepened and strengthened by his culture. They are stronger in him than they were in the savage. The man of false culture has grown ashamed of these primary emotions. He tries to make himself and other men believe that he does not feel them, that he has passed beyond them. A citizen of the world, patriotism has for him no meaning. A student of human nature and its weaknesses, any admiration or love for such a creature as man is has become a folly impossible for him. Having seen the world's ingratitude, the first impulse of man to labor for his fellow-man has lost its power over him. Plenty of

this false culture, this bad result of thought, of experience of life, there is everywhere around us. But wherever it exists, it is a blight. The men who are in its power feel the blight it brings. There is no millennium, no final perfection of humanity conceivable, except in the enthronement of the simplest and healthiest instincts and impulses of human life, purified and developed, but made more themselves by every culture that has come to them, no final peace or full attainment for men, until, in this sense, "a little child shall lead them."

Let us take a few of these first principles and see how essential their dominion is, and to what dangers it becomes exposed with the elaboration of man's life. And first, if you please, take the principle of confidence, or cordial and generous trust of man in man. Every reasonable man has some general conception, more or less clearly realized, about the humanity of which he is a part. He either holds that mankind is trustworthy, with frequent flagrant exceptions, of falseness and deceit; or else he holds that mankind is base and deceitful, with the occasional intrusion of an upright and honest man. How clear it is that according to which idea of humanity he holds will be every man's constant attitude towards his fellow-men. If he holds the first idea, he will be wisely trustful; he will feel that the safest attitude towards men is confidence, combined with such a reasonable watchfulness as shall keep him from being a foolish and easy dupe. If he holds the other idea, he is suspicious, he distrusts everybody at the first meeting. The first

presumption is that every man is bad. He disparages humanity. Only the longest and most careful scrutiny will let him believe that any best-seeming man is an exception to the general depravity, and is to be trusted and esteemed.

Who of us does not know the different attitudes of these two men towards humanity? The first is the attitude of youth. The second is the attitude of age. Not that they always belong with these different periods of life. There are plenty of young people—especially, it sometimes seems, in these days of ours, though that is hard to judge—plenty of young people who have or who affect to have the old men's spirit, who play the cynic, who sneer at and distrust humanity. And there are old men who believe in man, whose long experience, while it has made them watchful and not easily deceived, has only strengthened the belief with which their life began, that man is worthy of respect and honor, and that universal trust, if one had to choose between the two, is a safer attitude than universal disbelief. So there are always old young men and young old men; and yet it is in general true that skepticism about man is unnatural for youth, and that trust in man is a special and peculiar honor in old age. Life frets and wears and worries it away in hosts of men, and yet what would the world be without it? What leader to any good result did the world ever have who was not rich in it?

Easy enough it is to misrepresent and caricature such trust as blind, silly optimism; easy enough to picture it as if it were an abdication of all true dis-

crimination and intellectual responsibility. Easy enough, also, it would be to show that it is nothing of the kind. But now I only ask you to remember that practically no man has largely led or ruled the world without it. Christ Jesus had it perfectly. How gloriously He trusted men! The fervor of His terrible denunciations of the wicked gets its vividness from the background against which it stands of honor for and confidence in the soul of man. And the whole Bible, with its large, unguarded, unsuspicious utterance of God to man, laying itself open to a thousand misconceptions, always trusting itself cordially to men's wish to understand it — there could be nothing like the Bible, with its regal influence, to illustrate how all true leadership of men has for its first principle confidence in the men it tries to lead.

Then take another of the primary principles of human life and see how simple it is, and how essential it is to any complete and powerful humanity— the principle of absolute morality, the principle that the right is to be done because, simply because it is the right. All history of the world and of the individual continually shows how life, as it grows complicated, tends to get away from the simplicity of that principle, and shows also how, just so far as it gets away from it, it becomes weak. There grows up, in elaborated communities and in elaborated men, a disposition to dwell upon the advantages of good living, rather than upon its intrinsic goodness. "Honesty is right," says the child, and the childlike community. "Honesty is the best policy," says

experience, trying with laborious ingenuity to disguise its conscience in the robes of selfishness. The principle itself appears too simple, too young, too freshly out of the soul. Men who are in its power, even, do not dare to own their master by its name. How often you and I have done right things because we knew they were right, because we did not dare and did not want to disobey that simple, bare authority of righteousness; and then we have made up for our own souls and for the ears of other men other ingenious reasons for doing them that did not sound so fresh and simple and unsophisticated as that bare reason of morality. So it has come to this: that a man who, in a mixed company of practical men, debating what is profitable and what will pay, says quietly, "We must do this, whether it pays or not, for it is right," makes a stir run through the company as if a breath out of the fresh open heaven blew in through the suddenly opened window of a close and overheated room.

Let me name yet another principle, the power of which is the strongest that our human nature can submit to, and yet the dominion of which is constantly pushed out of sight as men grow more and more complicated in their living and thinking. I mean the principle of religion. Indeed, the whole case, as concerns religion, is very strange indeed when we think about it. That men should be wholly irreligious is conceivable; that, counting themselves completely creatures of this brown earth on which they live, they should go on with neither hope, nor fear, nor care, nor love which did not find

its source and satisfaction here—I do not say that this is possible, but it is perfectly conceivable: we can picture such a race crawling over the mountains and the fields of earth, like moles or lizards taking the color of the ground they crawled on. And then, we can conceive of just the opposite, of a religion frankly and simply acknowledged, set openly on the throne over every act, for every man to see; of a relation to an unseen power perfectly accepted and continually referred to, so that the man goes through life looking up, and with his conversation in the heavens.

Both of these conditions are conceivable; but another condition would be unconceivable if we did not see it constantly: a man religious and yet hiding his religion even from himself, full of the fears and hopes, the loves and hates, that belong to the spiritual world, and yet all the time trying to make himself believe, and to make other men believe, that it is here upon the earth that he finds his motives and his standards; knowing of God by some pervasive witness of Him which he finds spread all through his life, and yet never mentioning His name aloud, never frankly referring life to Him in whose Hands, if He exists at all, the reins of all life must immediately be held.

I said that such a man would be incredible if we did not see him every day; and tell me, do we not see him? What is the condition of nine men out of ten, whom you meet on the street or in society? They are not unbelievers, surely. They know of God; they think of Him; and yet, what are the

conscious motives by which they rule their lives? Are they God's will and God's standards? Do they ever take their lives up and frankly give them over as a whole to Him? Have they not surrounded and swathed religion with secondary explanations, saying to themselves that it cultivates beauty, that it is good for social order, that it brings out parts of man's nature which would not otherwise be developed? Never once, in all their lives, letting their souls go simply, freely, spontaneously, lovingly, as the bird goes to the nest, as the child goes to the mother; and being religious, being Christian, out of mere love and fear of God and Christ! The religion of a grown Christian man, or of an old Christian race, so loses simplicity and hides its life-principle under some disguise!

These are the principles whose dominion over mankind must be restored in its simplicity and majesty, before mankind can come to its millennial completeness; whose dominion over any man must be established before his life can become a true part of the Kingdom of God. The principle of confidence in man, the principle of absolute morality, the principle of direct and impulsive religion;—was I not right when I said of these principles that the time of their simple, calm, unquestioned reign over the lives of men would be fitly described as the time when "A little child shall lead them"?

How like a child a great principle is as it lives here in our world! It walks the earth with feet so soft that they are always being wounded, and yet so strong, with such a virtue in them, that the ground

they tread on changes and grows rich with blossoms under them. Like a child, a great simple principle always impresses us as being just fresh from God, and as having yet but imperfectly put on our human flesh. It has a child's weakness and a child's strength. It commands an influence in which there is always a mixture of pity. It is in constant danger of corruption, and yet we think of it as gifted with an almost divine power of taking care of itself, and keeping itself pure. It makes men obey it as if they were its slaves; and yet they who obey it patronize it as if it were under their protection, and could not live except for them. It demands what seem the most unreasonable things, and it appears to gain the things it asks by very virtue of their unreasonableness, or, at any rate, by an authority which is above reason. A great principle, like a child, is frank and unskilful, yet does with its blunt weapons what no sharpest and best tempered skill could do. It is abused, imposed upon, misunderstood, yet buoyantly rises in a self-confidence which is all the more complete because it is unconscious, and has its way at last. Appealing to men by its very lack of power to enforce its appeal by arms, creeping into their love, finding their noblest spots and their most pliant moods with an unerring instinct, harboring no grudges, growing angry at no slights, knowing intuitively where it will be welcome, sacrificing nothing to its dignity, yet keeping a sacredness before which rude men uncover their heads, perfectly clear and palpable, yet always wrapped in its mystery; so, with its wise, kind, true, unfearing eyes,

and its hands grasping the threads of silk that hold them fast, one of the great, simple, everlasting principles goes before a host of men, and leads them like a little child.

We need to realize and to believe that it is by the enthronement of those first great, simple, childlike principles that the world is to be saved. Men will learn more and more deep and subtle and complicated things, as years go on, about the true relations between man and man; but the great first thing that they must learn is, that man is by his very nature worthy of men's confidence and honor, that sin and untrustworthiness are intruders and exceptions to the fundamental principle of life. Men will learn to hear all the world keeping tune to the central harmony of righteousness; but the Gospel that they need must be in that central harmony itself, in the profounder and profounder sense that the right is to be done because it is the right, growing ever into beauty and power in their hearts. And it is not the nicety of religious speculation, it is not the refinement of religious thought, that is to be the great blessing of the spiritual days to come. It is the simple ripening into richer and richer power of the great, strong, tender conviction of the Love of God, with all the majestic authority which that conviction brings. In these great, broad, everlasting principles lies the world's hope and the hope of every man. These are the true kings of the human soul. By the growth of their power over you—by that, and that only—have you any right to judge the progress of your life.

Yet it is just these kings of human life that men disown. They will not mention them. They will give almost any other reason for an act of theirs, except the simple and generous one that they owe it to their fellow-men, or that it is right, or that God calls on them to do it. What is the reason of such a strange reluctance?—a reluctance, remember, that often goes along with a real inward loyalty to the Master whom the lips refuse to name.

Two or three reasons may be given. The first, I think, is the liability of these first principles of life to be counterfeited and pretended, and the difficulty of detecting the pretence from the reality. One great reason why men conceal, both from themselves and from each other, the high sentiments which often are the real ground of their action, is that dread to be or to be thought sentimental. Sentiment is childlike; sentimentality is childish. The childlike is always in danger of the childish. Sentimentality lurks behind sentiment, and men will rather be thought to live their lives on low and selfish grounds than to incur the shame that comes when, claiming the high motive by which they do really try to live, they are met with cool, contemptuous distrust and lack of sympathy. Say, "I did this thing because I thought it would be profitable"; and men will believe you and exclaim, "How frank and honest!" Say, "I did it because I thought it was God's will," and men will shrug their shoulders. In the first answer they suspect no hypocrisy, for who would counterfeit a pebble? In the second answer they feel almost sure of it, for how rare perfectly

pure diamonds are! Therefore it is that there is no proof in this world of a man's simple, absolute, manifest greatness so strong as his ability to claim for himself frankly the highest motives, and to be believed. Now and then in our lives we have met men who could say the most generous and lofty words, claim for themselves their servantship to principle and religion, and do it so truly, so simply, so plainly as the accepted fact of all their lives, that all men believed them as they spoke, and were impressed. No man dreamed of calling it hypocrisy, or sentimentality, or cant. To that degree of simple greatness, all men must come before it shall be true that a little child leads them.

Another reason why men will not allow that they are ruled by first principles, by the primary obligations of brotherhood, morality, and religion, seems to be that these reasons are too democratic. They run down too low. They may be the motives of all kinds of men. They may be the powers that move the sluggish wheels of the boor's life. The sage's finer machinery must answer to a subtler touch. And so we hear men either going below these motives, and talking about selfishness; or trying to go above them, and spinning æsthetic theories of life, talking about living by the laws and impulses of "beauty." But the real glory of these great fundamental principles is just here, in their universal range. The boor and the sage may both be religious, and that is the real glory of religion. The great fundamental principles are like life itself, which is the same for all men and yet different for every man. That which

was hardly more (though really something more) than an instinct in the lowest man, becomes full of consciousness, purpose, discrimination in the highest man, and yet it is the same thing still.

The true wish of the growing man ought to be that he may keep his share in the impulses that impel the simplest man, so far as they are healthy and genuinely human; and that, within these impulses, he may advance to ever new perception of their richness and ever deeper experience of their strength. It is what Schiller sings of man and the lower creatures:

"Seekest thou the highest, the greatest? Go to the lily to teach thee what it, willingless, is, that thou *by willing* must be."

It is the ever richer entrance of intelligent Will, the ever greater deepening of obedience to a principle by sympathetic understanding of the principle, that makes the true growth of the man within the principle. A true principle is large enough for the man to grow within it eternally. Within it our eternal life is to be lived. Not by abandoning the social life, the moral life, the religious life, are we to grow in heaven. But yet we are to grow there. The relations which we hold to our fellow-men, the naturalness of duty, the dearness of God,—these are to be the subjects of our endless learning. And as we learn them forever, we shall feel that we are not outgrowing and losing, but only unfolding and unfolding the great and inexhaustible authority to which we gave ourselves in the true but half-blind consecration of this imperfect world.

But, most of all, the reason why the great primary principles do not command men easily, and show themselves men's kings, lies in their impersonality. Men obey men. The power of an abstraction, however true, however lofty, is weak compared with the power of a personal master who comes with a manifest right to be obeyed. And even where obedience is given to an abstract principle, it is not so healthy and complete an act as if it were bestowed upon a personal master in whom that principle had found embodiment. It is almost always haunted by self-consciousness. This is why, as we see so often, a bad man is stronger than a good creed, and turns the soul that thought itself most settled in its principles, away from its belief to follow him.

This is also why, as we should see more often if we expected it more constantly, a good man is stronger than a bad creed, and a true life will reclaim and will hold the soul that false arguments have turned astray. Is it not true that each of our characters to-day is the result, not to any considerable degree of the abstractions we have believed, of the ideas that we have held, but of the human embodiments of principles, the personal presences of ideas in men which have been pressed upon our lives?

Wonderful and beautiful is this process of the gathering-in of the light and power of a principle into the effective nature of a person. Mysteriously, like the gathering of light into a star, truth gathers itself into a man. What a whole community has believed, some day, lo! it has taken shape and walks

the streets. Men have said to one another, "Honesty is sacred; we all ought to be honest"; and some day, lo! there is honesty walking in the guise of a man among them, and shaming every fraud, and cheering every struggle with temptation, as it looks at them out of human eyes. Men have said, "Purity is beautiful; we all ought to be pure"; and some day that light, too, gathers itself into a star. A pure man shines before us, and lust is shamed, and purity is inspired wherever his feet go!

Do you not see to what all this is pointing? Do you not recognize where it was that all this struggle of the abstract and vague to set itself forth, in the clearness and power of personality, attained its consummation? Remember the Gospel of St. John: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth; and we beheld his glory." Grace and Truth were abroad in the world, appealing to the hearts of men, claiming the hearts of men for the unseen God of whom they were the utterance. At last, in the mystery of the Incarnation, behold! "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." And what then?—"To as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

O my dear friends, if only, instead of reading these words as if they were a riddle to hide some bewildering doctrine, or as if they were the history of some great, dead, past event,—if we could read them as the story of our own present life, as the promise of the way in which the principles which we reverence and love and try to obey might indeed

become our masters! The principle of Human Brotherhood, the principle of Duty, the principle of God—those first truths, those fundamental impulses of men, how shall they become our lords? Only by their entering into a Lordship which shall seize us and hold us with that strong warm grasp in which personal Love lays hold of personal gratitude, and the splendor of personal Holiness lays hold upon an answering personal admiration and invitation.

Think how all that was in the days which are a perpetual picture of all the days of Christ. Christ walked by the sea of Tiberias, and saw the fishermen mending their nets,—and He called to them across the blue water, "Follow me"; and they started and followed Him. James and John, leaving Zebedee their father in the boat, followed Him. But by and by they must have known that, in Him, they were following the shadowy and splendid masters whose mastery had tempted but eluded all their youth. They were learning faith in man, and love for righteousness, and loyalty to God, as they learned Him. They were attaining these, as they attained Him. They did not talk of these. They talked of Him. Their eyes were fixed on Him. But that dominion of the primary and essential masters of the human soul which they had longed for, which they had struggled for, became a true reality to them as, full of ever deepening love, they followed Jesus.

Little by little His love tightened around them. And at last there came the Cross. He died for them. For their help, for their hope, He went

patiently on and on, and at last the Cross completed everything. Then gratitude and admiration overwhelmed and gathered them into the depths of love past all escape. As a shell that has floated on the sea at last fills itself with the sea, and sinks into the sea; so these disciples' lives, which had floated on the bosom of Christ's Love, when at last the Crucifixion came, filled themselves with Christ's Love and sank into its depths. Thenceforward they must follow Him.

They followed Him until He brought them to their crosses. They followed Him across the dark river. They are following Him to-day in some bright fields of the unknown eternity. But wherever they are following Him, they are following in Him these eternal principles,—the Love of Brethren, the Love of Right, the Love of God. We lift up the eyes of our faith, and far away, yet very near to us—far beyond us, yet under the same guidance and on the same road where we may walk if we are humbly Christ's—we can see those saints of old, those fishermen of Galilee, walking still in the footsteps of the same Master that they followed over their native hills so long ago. To them the promises have been fulfilled: A little child is leading them. "They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Is that the Gospel? Indeed it is! All that the Saviour does for us,—the priceless forgiveness of our sins, the opened prospect of eternal life,—it all has its great, one, only purpose, that by the power of gratitude we may be bound into His

service and made to follow Him with an unquestioning faith.

You say proudly, "I mean to live up to my principles." That is well; but oh, it is better if you can say humbly, "I pray that I may follow Christ." In Him your principles walk transfigured, glorified before you, and draw you "with the cords of a man."

Men, women, little children, all may follow Him. Through our separate ways of light or darkness He will lead us all until He brings us to God, in whom we shall surely find ourselves.

III.

THE NEARNESS OF GOD.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."—Acts xvii. 27.

THE surprise of life always comes in finding how we have missed the things which have lain nearest to us; how we have gone far away to seek that which was close by our side all the time. Men who live best and longest are apt to come, as the result of all their living, to the conviction that life is not only richer but simpler than it seemed to them at first. Men go to vast labor seeking after peace and happiness. It seems to them as if it were far away from them, as if they must go through vast and strange regions to get to it. They must pile up wealth, they must see every possible danger of mishap guarded against, before they can have peace. Upon how many old men has it come with a strange surprise, that peace could come to rich or poor only with contentment; and that they might as well have been content at the very beginning as at the very end of life. They have made a long journey for their treasure, and when at last they stoop to pick it up, lo! it is shining close beside the

footprint which they left when they set out to travel in a circle.

So we seek to know our fellow-men, and think that the knowledge can be gained only by long and suspicious experience and watchfulness of their behavior; but all the while the real power of knowledge is sympathy, and many a child has that, and knows men better than we do with all our cautiousness. And so we plot, and lay our schemes, and go long ways about to make men like us, it may be to be famous, when their liking lies right at our feet; to be ours certainly any moment when we will just be simple and true, and forget ourselves, and genuinely care for other men, and let them see that we care for them in frank and unaffected ways. We try to grow powerful by parading what we think that we can do, by displaying the tools of our power before men, by showing them why they ought to feel our influence. Only gradually we learn that power lies as close to us as work lies, that no man can really do real work and not be powerful.

It is a vague sense of all this, I think, that makes a certain confusion and perplexity and mystery in life. The idea that there is much more near us than we understand or know, that we are every hour on the brink of doing things and being things which yet we never do or are,—this is what gives to life a large part of its restlessness, and also a large part of its inspiration. We seem to ourselves, sometimes, like men who are walking in the dark up and down a great, richly furnished house, where tools for every kind of work and supplies for every want are lying

on every hand. We find rich things, we taste delicious meats, we recognize the fitnesses and the care that have provided most ingenious comforts; but all the while we are not sure but there is something even richer, more delicious, more ingenious, which we have almost touched but passed by in the dark.

There comes in life to almost all men, I suppose, a certain sense of fumbling, a consciousness of this vague living in the dark. And out of it there come the everlasting and universal characteristics of humanity, which are in all men of every age and every time, which belong to man as man,—the ever reappearing and unquenched hope, the sense that nothing is quite impossible, the discontent with any settled conditions, the self-pity and pathos with which men always regard their own lives when they are thoughtful, and the self-reproach which is always lying in wait just under the surface of our most complacent vanity. All of these—and all of them belong so to human life that the man who has not any of them is an exception—all of them come from that condition in which men vaguely know that they are always missing the things that they need most, that close beside them are most precious things which they are brushing with their robes, which they are touching with their fingers, but which, lying in the dark, they cannot see.

And now suppose that it were possible for any being, standing where he could look at man, apart from him and yet in fullest sympathy with him, to watch his fumbling with a sight that could see

through the darkness. What would his feeling be about this humanity that he saw forever missing the helps and chances that it needed, missing them often only by a finger's breadth? How solemn his sight of man would be! Right by the side of our thinking race to-day lie the inventions and discoveries of the years to come. This seer, to whom the darkness is no darkness, would discern them all. He has always seen how man has missed the nearest things. He saw how for ages the inventions which the world has already reached—the quick-hearted steam, the eager, trembling, vocal electricity, the merciful ether that almost divinely says, "Be still!" to pain,—how all these lay unfound just where the hand of man seemed to touch them a hundred times, and then wandered on unwittingly to play with trifles. He saw how a continent lay hid for ages from the eyes of men. He saw how hearts came and went in this world, always just touching on, just missing of, the great comforting truths of a personal immortality, till Christ with His Gospel brought it to light. He has seen how single souls have gone through life burdened, distressed, perplexed, while just beside them, so close that it seemed as if they could not step an inch without seeing it, so close that it seemed as if they could not move without finding their hot and tired souls bathed in its rich waters, flowed the comfortable faith they wanted, the river of the Water of Life which their death was crying out for.

What must be the feeling of such a being about human life? Pity and awe. A blended sense of

what a vast endowment man has, what a vast thing it is to be a man, and at the same time of what a terrible thing it is to miss so much,—the feeling with which even the weakest child of Gaza looks at the blind giant Sampson, helplessly feeling for the great columns of the house. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered thy children, but thou wouldst not"— Jesus, the Saviour, was having just that view of human nature when He cried out so. And who will say that there was not a reverence for Jerusalem mixed with the pity for Jerusalem in the Lord's heart? And when it is not Jerusalem, but you or I, who is not exalted and solemnized when he is able to rise up and believe that there is not merely pity for the sinner who can be so wicked, but reverence for the child of God who might be so good, blended into that perfect unity of Saving Love with which Jesus stoops to lift even the vilest and most insignificant of us out of his sin?

And now, after all this, let us come to our text. St. Paul is preaching on Mars Hill to the Athenians. We hear a great deal about the eloquence, the skill, the tact of that wonderful discourse; of how St. Paul, with exquisite discrimination, said to those men of Athens just the right thing for them. That is putting it too low. The power of his tact was really love. He felt for those men, and so he said to them what they personally needed. And he was, as regarded them, just where the looker-on whom I was picturing is with regard to the men stumbling and fumbling in the darkness of which I spoke.

Never were people on the brink of so many of the highest things, and missed them, as these Athenians. They felt all the mystery, the mysterious suggestiveness of life. They built their altar to the unknown God. The air around them was all tremulous with power. They were always on the brink of faith, without believing; always on the brink of divine charity, yet selfish; always touched by the atmosphere of spirituality, yet with their feet set upon the material and carnal. Of such men there were two views to be taken by one who looked in upon their darkness from a higher light. Easy enough it is to be contemptuous; easy enough to cry out "Hypocrite!" to condemn as hopelessly frivolous and insincere this life which always walked on the brink of earnestness, and yet was never earnest; to condemn, as the sweeping critics of all modern doubt are apt to do, every altar to the "Unknown God" as if those who had built it certainly cared more about and worshipped more the "unknown" than the "God," delighted more in His uncertainty than in His Divinity. Easy enough it is to do this, but possible, at least, it is to do something very different from this, possible to be impressed as St. Paul was with reverence and pity that left no room for contempt, reverence for the men who came so near to so much, and pity for the men who missed it so sadly. Oh, be sure, my friends, that whenever you see a poor bewildered thinker, or a puzzled youth feeling about vainly for his work, his place, his career in life, there are those two thoughts for you to have about them both,—the

thought of contempt and the thought of reverence and pity; and be sure that the first thought is mean and unworthy of a fellow-man, and that the second thought is the thought of the best and wisest and divinest men, the thought of St. Paul and of Jesus Christ.

And now, what makes the difference between these two kinds of observation, these two men with their different sight of a human life? It is not hard to see. Is it not simply that the man who looks upon his brother's puzzled life with reverence and pity is the man who sees God there behind the life which he is looking at? The man who looks at his brother's restless life with contempt, is the man who sees no God there, to whom the everlasting human restlessness is nothing but the vain and aimless tossing about of a querulous dissatisfaction. If there is no God whose life and presence, dimly felt, is making men toss and complain, then their tossing and complaining is an insignificant and a contemptible thing. It would be better if they could be calm like the beasts. If there is a God to whom they belong, from whom the thinnest veil separates them; whom they feel through the veil, though they cannot see Him; whom they feel through the veil even when they do not know that it is He whom they feel—then their restlessness, their feverish hope, their dreams and doubts, become solemn and significant, something which any thoughtful man may well delight to study, and may well rejoice if he can at all help them to their satisfaction.

And this is just what St. Paul tells the Athenians.

He says, "You are restless and discontented. You are always seeming to be near something which yet you do not reach. Your feet are always pressing the brink of a knowledge which you never come to know. You are always half aware of something which you never see. I will tell you what it means. Your restlessness, your impatience, your discontent, however petty be the forms it takes, is solemn and not petty to me, because of what it means. It means that God is not far from every one of you."

Oh, what a revelation that was! What a preaching that was that day on Mars Hill! It was as if one came to a blind child, sitting in a room where he thought himself alone, and wondering at the restlessness which would not let him settle down to quiet thought and work, and said to him, "I can tell you what it means. You are not alone here though you think you are. Your father is here, though you cannot see him. It is his unseen presence that haunts you and disquiets you. All these many disturbances which your mind undergoes are really one disturbance,—the single disturbance of his being here. It is simply impossible for you to sit here as if he were not here. The only peace for you is to know and own his presence, to rise up and go to him, to make your whole thought and life centre and revolve about the fact that he certainly is here, to quiet your disturbance in the bosom of that presence, known, out of which, unknown, your disturbance came."

And that is what Christianity reveals. What St. Paul said to the men of Athens, Christ says to

everybody, to you and me and all these multitudes. He comes to you, and says it: "You are restless, always on the brink of something which you never reach, always on the point of grasping something which eludes you, always haunted by something which makes it impossible for you to settle down into absolute rest. Behold, I tell you what it means. It is God with you. It is Emmanuel. His presence it is that will not let you be at peace. You do not see Him, but He is close by you. You never will have peace until you do see Him and come to Him to find the peace which He will not let you find away from Him. Come unto me, and I will give you rest." That was the revelation of the Incarnation. Listen, how across all the centuries you can hear the Saviour giving that revelation, that interpretation of their own troubled lives to multitudes; now to Nicodemus, now to the Samaritan woman, now to Pontius Pilate, and all along, every day, to His disciples by what they saw from hour to hour of His peace in His Father.

Listen again. Hear Christ giving the same revelation to-day; and ask yourself this: "If it were true, if God in His perfectness, with His perfect standards in Himself, with His perfect hopes for me, God in His complete holiness and His complete love,—if He were here close to me, only separated from me by the thin veil of my blindness, would it not explain everything in my life?" There is the everlasting question, my dear friends, to which there is only one answer. What else can explain this mysterious, bewildering, fluttering, hoping, fearing,

dreaming, dreading, waiting, human life,—what but this, which is the Incarnation truth, that God from whom this life came is always close to it, that He is always doing what He can do for it, even when men do not see Him, and that He cannot do for them all His love would do only because of the veil that hangs between Him and them? "Not far from every one of us!"—there is the secret of our life—weak and wicked because we will not live with God; restless, unable to be at peace in our weakness and wickedness, because God is not far from us.

But it is time for us to take this idea of God very near us, and giving Himself to all of us just as fully as we will receive Him, and follow it out more in detail. God is to men wisdom and comfort and spiritual salvation. See how our truth applies to each of these.

1. And first about God's wisdom. I can conceive of a humanity which, up to the limits of its human powers, should understand God. No cloud should come in anywhere. It should know everything about Him which it was within the range of its nature to comprehend. Then I can conceive of another humanity which should not understand God at all, to which God should not even try to communicate Himself, which He should govern as He governs the unintelligent planets, without an effort to let them know His nature or His plans. Now which of these two is this humanity of ours? Certainly, neither of them. Certainly not the humanity which knows God perfectly, for see how ignorant we are! But certainly, upon the other hand, not the

humanity that knows nothing of God; for behold how much we do know, how precious to our hearts is what we know of Him!

What then? I look back over all the history of man's acquaintance with God, all the religions, all the theologies, and it seems to me to be all so plain. Here has been God forever desiring, forever trying, to give the knowledge of Himself to man. There has been never anything like playing with man's mind, like leading men on to ask questions and then wilfully holding back the knowledge which men asked for; always God has been trying to make men understand Him. Never has He turned and gone away in anger, and left man in his ignorance. He has hovered about man's mind with an unbroken presence. Wherever there was any chink, He has thrust in some knowledge of Himself. Thus man in every age, in every condition, even in his own despite, has learned that God is just, that God is merciful, that He governs the world in obedience to His own perfect nature, that He therefore must punish and that He must reward. These are not guesses about God which man has made. They are not beliefs about Him which men have reasoned out from their own natures. They are the truths about Himself which God has been able to press into the human understanding, even through every veil which man drew between himself and God.

I love to think of this; I love to think that there is no man so ignorant, so careless, so indifferent about what God is and what God is doing, that God is not all the time pressing upon that man's life, and

crowding into it all the knowledge of Himself that it will take. As the air crowds upon everything, upon the solidest and hardest stone, and on the softest and most porous earth, and into each presses what measure of itself each will receive; so God limits the revelation of Himself by nothing but by the capacity of every man to take and hold His revelation. This is not hard to understand or to believe. Into a roomful of people who differ in natural capacity and education, comes one man whose nature is rich, whom to know is itself a culture. The various people in the room do know him, all of them; but one knows him far more intimately, takes him far more deeply into his understanding, than another. All grades of knowledge about this newcomer are in that room, from almost total ignorance to almost perfect intimacy; but it is not that he has nicely discriminated and determined to whom he shall give himself, to whom he shall deny himself, and just how much he shall give himself to each. He has given the knowledge of himself just as bounteously to each, just as far into each, as he could.

I love to think that that is true of God. The blindest, dullest heathen is pressed upon by that same knowledge of God, eager to give itself away, that presses on the wisest saint. The heathen does not wait till our missionary comes to him. You are not kept waiting until all your doubts are settled and your fogs dispersed. At this moment, on every soul in this wide world, God is shedding that degree of the knowledge of Himself which the con-

dition of that soul will allow. Is not that where what we call the false religions come from? They are imperfect religions. If they are religions at all, as indeed they are, it is because of what they know of God. Our missionaries must go to them with our religion as the elder brother goes to the younger brother, speaking of the father, of whom they both know something, out of the fuller knowledge which has come to him, but with sincere respect and reverence for all that his brother has been able to learn already.

Remember, God is teaching you always just as much truth as you can learn. If you are in sorrow at your ignorance then, still you must not despair. Be capable of more knowledge and it shall be given to you. What hinders you from knowing God perfectly is not God's unwillingness but your imperfectness. Grow better and purer, and diviner wisdom shall come to you, not given as wages, as reward, but simply admitted into a nature grown more capable of receiving it. Here is our old text again: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Here is Christ's old promise again: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him."

2. But see again how true our truth is when we think of God as the giver not of wisdom, but of comfort. Two men are in deep suffering; the same great woe has fallen upon each of them. They need, with their poor bruised and mangled souls, they both need some healing, some strength which

they cannot make for themselves. What is the reason that one of them seems to get it and the other fails? Why is it that one lifts up his head and goes looking at the stars, while the other bends and stoops, and goes with his eyes upon the ground? Is one God's favorite more than the other? Is God near to one and far off from the other? We dream such unhealthy dreams! We fancy such unreal discriminations and favoritisms! We think that one soul is held in the great warm hands, while the other is cast out on the cold ground! But then comes in our truth: "He is not far from every one of us." *From every one of us!* The difference, then, cannot be in God and in His willingness; it must be in the souls.

What, then, can we say to any soul that seems to be left comfortless when other souls all around it are gathering in comfort plentifully? There are two things that we may say, I think; and oh, that I could say them to any of your souls that need them! The first is this: God is comforting and helping you even when you do not know it. Do not let yourself imagine for a moment that God's help to you is limited by what you can feel and recognize. Here is a man upon whom one of the great blows of life has fallen. He is not embittered by it. He is not proud and sullen. He goes to God and knows that his only help is in Him. He goes away and comes back to the same mercy seat, and goes away and comes again; and always he seems to himself to be carrying his whole burden. He cannot feel it grow any lighter on his shoulders.

But all the time he goes about his work. He does his duty. He will not let his sorrow break down his conscience. Do not I know something about that man which he does not know about himself? Do not I know that God is helping him when he thinks himself most unhelped? Do not I know that his burden is a very different thing from what it would be to him if there were no God? Believe and remember that, I beseech you, about your own suffering. If you are really looking to God for help, He is sending you help although you do not know it. Believe it also about your temptation. If you are really asking strength, He is giving you strength, although you do not feel it. Feeling is not the test. Your soul is feeding on it, though your eyes may not see it, any more than they can see the sweet and wholesome air by which you live.

And then, when this is said; and when there still remains the evident difference in the nearness of two men's souls to God which this cannot explain; remember then that the difference must be in the men. In something that you are, not in anything that God is, must be the secret of the darkness of your soul. Do not let yourself for one moment think or feel that God has turned His back upon you, that He has gone away from you and left you to your fate. Don't ask yourself, if He had, who are you that you should call Him back? Who is He that He should turn round at your calling? That way lies despair. No, "He is not far from every one of us." He is not far from you. It is you that must

turn to Him; and when you turn His light is already shining full upon you. What a great truth it is, how full of courage, this truth that man may go away from God, but God cannot go away from man! How God loves His own great character of faithfulness! He cannot turn His back upon His child. If His face is not shining upon you, it must be that your back is turned on Him. And if you have turned away from Him, you can turn back to Him again. That is the courage which always comes to one who takes all the blame of life upon himself, and does not cast it upon God. In humility there is always comfort and strength.

3. But we must not stop here. Where is the God who brings the spiritual salvation, who makes a man know his sin, and gives him the blessing of forgiveness and the peace of the new life? Is He, too, near to every man, ready to help, always trying to help all men to be deeply and spiritually good? This, it seems to me, is what a great many men find it harder to believe than they do that the God of wisdom or comfort is near His children. Many men believe that they can understand God and lay claim to His consolations, who seem to hold that His spiritual presence, the softening, elevating, purifying power of His grace, belongs to certain men only. Indeed, is it not the growing heresy of our time that what we call the Christian character, the beauty of self-sacrifice, devotion, spiritual duty, is possible for some men, but for other men, perhaps for most men, is impossible? That Christian character is not denied; its charm is felt. But it seems to belong

to certain constitutions, and to be quite out of the power of others.

Ah, how the human mind swings back forever to a few first ideas, and holds them in some new form in each new age, but does not get beyond them! This feeling about the few men who are supposed to be capable of Christian experience is but the naturalistic statement, in a naturalistic age, of the same idea which in a legal and governmental age was stated as the doctrine of election. The man who, two hundred years ago, would have seen his brethren around him coming to Christ, and have sat down in submissive or sullen misery, saying, "Well, there is no chance for me. Others are called, but I am non-elect,"—that same man now, catching the tone of the age, looks round upon the praying and believing multitude, and says more or less sadly, but with no more real self-reproach than the soul which recognized its reprobation: "Religion is a thing of temperament, and I am non-religious." Against them both, protesting that both are false and shallow views of this solemn human life of ours, —against them both, whether souls are hiding in them as excuses, or crushed under them as burdens, there stands the everlasting simple Bible truth of the universal nearness of God: "He is not far from every one of us."

And just as soon as men really get below the surface, and have broken through the superficial look and current theories of things, and really have come to real study of their own spiritual lives, I believe that it is absolutely true that they always find that

there is nothing which so meets the story of their lives, nothing which can so explain themselves to themselves, as this; which you may call at first an hypothesis if you will, but which verifies itself to us as all hypotheses must verify themselves, by the way in which it meets the facts which have to be explained; the hypothesis of God present with and always trying to work upon our souls, to make them good, pure, strong, true, brave; unseen by us, but always close to us; and, because He is God, always working, always hindered by our ignorance, our obstinacy, our wickedness, but never discouraged, never turning away, doing all that omnipotent Love can do upon unwilling human souls to make them live to Him.

If that were true, what would our life be? Think it out; think how a being would live, how he would feel, that was thus ever touched and pressed upon by a God he did not see, trying to persuade him to holiness, trying to convince him of sin; and then run back over the life you have been living ever since you can remember, and tell me if they do not perfectly match and coincide. Restless, self-accusing, dreaming of goodness which you never reached; fitfully trying tasks which all your old experience told you were impossible; haunted by wishes which you dared to laugh at, but did not dare to chase away; with two sets of standards about right and wrong, one which you kept for the world, the other which you hid deep in your heart and were more than half ashamed of;—what does all that correspond to but the life that a man must live who is

surrounded and pressed upon by an unseen God? God-haunted our lives are, until they give themselves to God, as the brain of a sleeper is haunted by the daylight until he opens his eyes and gives himself a willing servant to the morning.

Or a beast lies tangled in a net. Some kind hands try to unsnarl the cords and let him go. The creature feels them tugging at the strings, and writhes and struggles all the more, and twists himself into a yet more inextricable snarl. But by and by he catches in his dull soul the meaning of the tugs and pulls that he feels, and he enters into sympathy with his deliverers. He lies still while they unbind him, or he moves only so as to help their efforts, and so at last he is free. That is the way in which God sets a soul free from its sins. And therein the soul freed from its sins sees the explanation of all its struggles which have gone before.

This, then, is the story of the present God. What is the meaning of the Incarnation? We picture Christ coming from far, down through the ranks of angels, down from the battlements of heaven; far, far beyond the sun we picture Him leaving His eternal seat and "coming down" to save the world. Then we picture Christ's departure. Back by the way He came, beyond the sun again, once more through the shining hosts, until He takes His everlasting seat at the right hand of God. There is truth in such pictures. But have we not caught more of the spirit of the Incarnation if we think of it, not as the bringing to us of a God who had been far away, but as the showing to us of a God who had been

hidden? It is as if the cloud parted and the tired and thirsty traveller saw by his side a brook of clear, sweet water, running along close by the road he travelled. Then the cloud closed again, but the traveller who had once seen the brook never could be faint with thirst again. He must always know where to find it and drink of it. Christ was not a God coming out of absence. He was the ever-present God, revealing how near He always was.

And so of the new life of Christ in man. It is not something strange and foreign, brought from far away. It is the deepest possibility of man, revealed and made actual. When you stand at last complete in Christ, it is not some rare adornments which He has lent from His Divinity to clothe your humanity with. Those graces are the signs of your humanity. They are the flower of your human life, drawn out into luxuriance by the sunlight of the divine Love. You take them as your own, and "wear them as the angels wear their wings."

This is what Belief means, then. Not the far-off search for a distant God, but the turning, the looking, the trusting, to a God who has been always present, who is present now. This is what Belief means. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

IV.

THE OLD-NEW AND THE NEW-OLD.

"But these things have I told you that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."—JOHN xvi. 4.

JESUS CHRIST is just upon the point of leaving His disciples. He has but a few more days to spend with them, a few more words to speak to them. And so, as He sits gazing into their faces, He is moved to tell them what has been the whole method of His teaching of them. He tells them that He has always had this hour in His sight, that always, when He has been speaking to them, it has been not simply the present moment of which He has been thinking, and which He has been trying to feed with truth; He has also had the future in His mind. He has been storing in the granaries of their nature provision for the wants which were to be developed in far distant days.

The disciples must have been deeply impressed and touched by those words of their Master. They must have felt their whole nature taken up into His hands. Their future needs must have grown real to their anticipation when they heard their Lord say that He had been providing for those needs. And

the warm sense of His affection, of how entirely He loved them, must have filled their souls with strength and comfort. For there is no proof and sign of love like this which, in its own extremity of suffering, forgets itself and takes care that those whom it loves shall not suffer because of its departure from them; and goes to its martyrdom making each footprint of its agony a well out of which they may drink.

It was the token of Christ's thoughtfulness for them that must have touched them. No benefaction touches us deeply which has not the idea of thoughtfulness pervading it. That is the reason why we are not touched and grateful at the beneficence of nature, save in a figure. The sky has not treasured its rain because we are going to need it by and by, nor stored its sunshine because it foresees that the earth will lie naked and shivering when February comes. Law cannot win our gratitude, however it may stir our admiration and our gladness. But God foresees our need, and stocks the world for its supply. "Thou hast prepared a table before me," says David. It is the preparation more than the table that draws His soul to God. And so, even more than the truth He had laid up for them, the fact that He *had* laid up truth for them was what impressed the disciples with the love of Christ.

But when we look at what Christ had actually done, we are impressed with the wisdom and the depth of His treatment of His servants. It is indeed the method which all wise and loving education naturally takes. It makes the difference between the teaching which is hard and meagre and the other

teaching which is rich and sympathetic. A master orders his servant to do a certain task, and he gives him just the instruction which that task requires. But a father educates his son, and he stores away into that unconscious nature a hundred things which his experience has taught him that the boy's advancing experience will by and by require. A worthy teacher deals worthily with his scholar; and it is like the fitting out of a ship in some southern harbor for the voyage which she is to make in arctic seas. She lies there in the sunshine at the hospitable wharf, with the warm atmosphere about her, everything bright and open and summerlike; and men are bringing on board great casks of provisions and bales of thick warm clothing. They are making her walls thick and her doors close, to keep out cold which as yet she has never felt. They are strengthening her sides for the assaults of icy seas of which she has not dreamed. Long months the stores of clothing and of food will lie in the darkness of her hold. She will sail forth, and for a time it will appear as if there were no use for such strange provision. But at last the day will come, among the icebergs, close to the pole, when she will need them all; and then they will come forth to bear their blessed testimony to the wise care which filled the ship's hold with them on the June day when she was loaded. So does the teacher tell his pupil things of which the pupil sees not now the meaning or the use, that, when the time of need shall come, he may remember that his teacher told him of them.

Every now and then we hear from parents and

from teachers talk which we cannot help thinking foolish and shortsighted. "Let us teach children," so it runs, "nothing which they cannot immediately understand." If we really mean by "understanding" the clear and immediate apprehension of the truth and all that it involves, then surely such words describe a very meagre education, and one that provides only for a very monotonous and narrow life. The ship which men load thus must sail forever in the zone where it was freighted. If it cross the circle and sail into another zone, its food will spoil and its crew will lie shivering and frozen on its decks. If you say, "My child has never yet met sorrow, and so I will not tell him what the sources of consolation are; he has not met temptation, and so I cannot inspire him with the thought of the sinfulness of sin; he is not sensible of the attraction of study, and I must not tell him of the duty of study; he has never asked for truth, and so I will teach him no creed"—do you not see how meagre all this makes your relationship to him? Do you not see how suspiciously it keeps you standing over him, determining that he shall have no food until the appetite cries out for it? Do you not see how it loses for him all that crowding and tempting forth of appetite which comes from the sense of carrying untasted food stored in the bosom of his life? Do you not see how it limits your opportunity of help to him and leaves the long future, when you may be gone out of his sight, beyond the chance of any such ministry as your love craves to give him?

Rather, tell your child or your scholar the very

best you know; tell it as simply, in as true relation to his intrinsic nature as you can; tell him of Christ in all the richness of His love; so you will be feeding him for days which shall not dawn for long years yet. Put the whole seed of truth into him, and as his ship sails on from zone to zone, each new zone will call out its new growth to greet it. The deck will be always bright with flowers, always opening anew in each new climate out of seed which you planted against that hour. So let your scholar or your child sail forth out of your schoolroom or your home, carrying in him unknown strength and character which shall unfold for the supply of emergencies of which as yet he has not dreamed.

But when, in a more deliberate way, we take the words of Jesus Christ which declare this truth, and find in them His statement of the whole method of His religion, it is necessary for us to join with them some other words of His. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," He said. These two utterances, together, seem to include the whole system of the perpetuation and development of the Christian Faith. See how they co-operate with one another. Jesus says that He has sown in His disciples' hearts truths which the coming experiences and emergencies of life are to unfold. He says also that He Himself will be forever present to preside over the unfolding of those truths. He stores His Church with all that it is going to need. Yet He does not send it forth out of His hands, to have no more personal connection with Him, but He goes with it to make the truth which, in the

days of each new need, it brings out of its treasuries, fresh and vital with Himself.

Behold the completeness and proportion of that picture! Here is an historic faith which yet is always full of spontaneity! Its historic character gives it solidity and continual identity. Its spontaneity makes it the new faith of each succeeding age. It is a faith which may picture itself under the metaphor of a rock or under the metaphor of a fountain. Some men, in Christian history, thinking of Christianity only as an historical religion, have made it hard and stiff and formal, a thing of traditions and of precedents, to be unearthed out of patristic books and to be cultivated by the preservation of old ceremonies. Other men, scarcely recognizing the historical nature of Christianity at all, have made it a thing of immediate inspiration. The present Christ was everything, the historic Christ was almost nothing. Their religion might be almost said to perish and be born anew each instant.

It is the glory of the New Testament pictures of these two utterances of Jesus, that they preserve the strength and escape the weakness of each of these two ideas by blending them with one another. The Churchman and the Quaker meet in the full Christian of those wide, wise pages. The thing which the Church is to-day, it has been potentially from the beginning, and yet it becomes this to-day by the immediate power of a present Christ. Like the tree which had all the luxuriance of this sweet and gorgeous springtime in the seed which the farmer planted who died fifty years ago, and yet

which blossomed this spring because spring had come and this May's sun had shone; so the Church and the Faith, historic and spontaneous at once, have in them, as they present themselves to-day, the power of the Christ who spoke by the side of the sea of Tiberias words which His disciples then only half-understood, and also the power of the Christ who to-day feeds them with His ever-living love, His ever-timely wisdom.

Of course all this is true not only of the historic faith, but it is true of all life, for all life is historic. "*De nihilo nihil*,"—there is no life upon the earth to-day that has not come of previous life. To feel the beating of that previous life, to recognize as elements in what is done to-day the force of things, known or unknown, which were done years and years ago,—that is the historic spirit. No institution of the present, however it may seem to have sprung yesterday out of the soil, no life, however it may seem to be free from every bondage of the past, is capable of being understood without the activity of that historic spirit.

And yet that spirit alone can never read the entire secret, or account for all the power of any institution or life. Everything is historic, but nothing is entirely historical. Everything that truly lives, lives now. There is a living power, a power of life, which now vitalizes that which has come down of the past, and makes it a true being of the actual present.

Here is an act which some man—he may have been a ruler playing with the fates of empires, he may have been a farmer doing the springtime

ploughing in his field—here is an act which some man has done this week. How shall I study it? How shall I understand it? What shall it mean to me? Most impressive is it if I think of it historically. I see the far-off centuries converging on this momentary action. I hear the sweep of distant forces crowding onward through forgotten periods to insure that this thing shall be done. I see men of long-vanished times and of mysterious races planning for—they know not what, but really to make this possible. Then, coming nearer, I see the recognizable play of cause and effect, effect and cause, each cause issuing as effect, each effect turning into cause. I hear the click and clank of the machinery from which at last issues this event.

All that is wonderfully interesting and impressive; and yet how I have failed to tell the story of the action, if this is all I have to say! To leave out all the tale of present energy and purpose; not to observe nor to describe the stream of living power in the statesman's or the peasant's nature which plays on all this historical machinery and makes it live; to let go all the personality and spontaneity of will; —that would be the grossest blunder. It would be the blunder of a pedant, and a pedant's blunders always are the worst blunders. To misread the working of present, vital force is bad; to deny present working force is infinitely worse, for it degrades the world to a machine.

The truth is that the vital power of present men and present motives is what keeps the world alive to-day. Living desires of living souls, the wishes,

the determinations of men to do and be things here and now,—these are what constitute the world's vitality. History accounts for the forms of their activity, but the springs of their activity are in themselves. All history might be abolished; all that is in man by inheritance might be eliminated and cast out; man might stand as fresh and new as if he were an Adam of yesterday, with no garden, no fall, no experience behind him; and he would live—clumsily, awkwardly, but he would live. He would begin to make history, for history is the utterance of life, afterwards becoming the feeder and teacher of life; but it is never the creator of life, and so it is always the inferior of those fresh currents of vitality which are forever issuing new and original from the fountain of God, and flowing through the vital channels of men's wills.

"There is nothing new under the sun" is a true but also shallow proverb. "Everything under the sun is new" is vastly truer and profounder. In the meeting of the two proverbs, in the combination of them as the account of life, lies the meeting of the historic and the spontaneous consciousness of man.

You remember how Tennyson nobly sings:

> Love thou thy land with love far brought
> From out the storied past, but used
> Within the present, and transfused
> Through distant times by power of thought.

There is the true spirit of history. The storied past opens her gates and out of them comes the great caravan bringing its precious freight of rich associa-

tions, noble deeds, and truths wrought out in the experiences of other days. The caravan slowly winds over the desert of the centuries until it enters the city of our present life. Then down from the camels' backs come the rich and fragrant bales. They are torn open by the eager hands of present needs. Their contents are seized for present use. Thought transforms them into shapes in which the future is to use them. And by and by we load the camels once again, to travel on over new deserts to new cities of the still distant times, bearing the treasures of history made richer by the free uses of spontaneous life to which they have been freely put.

Such is all life — an Adam ever being born, an image ever being formed out of the dusty past, but made a true existence in the present by the direct inspiration of the living God.

And now, to return and consider the position of our Christian Faith. Christianity is an historical religion. Think what its great creed is, which we say together Sunday after Sunday. It is a recital of history. It is the epic of a human life. Something which actually happened, some one who actually lived,—it is in these that we believe. True, those historical events and that historic Person were the utterances on the theatre of human life of everlasting principles, of truths and forces which had been real in the universe eternally. That Christ was the Everlasting Son of the Father. His sacrifice was the utterance of an Eternal Love. His Resurrection was the triumph of the Essential Principle of Life. Behind His history, as behind all history, there lay

those first and fundamental truths which must be true before anything can happen in the world. But none the less the manifestation of those eternal truths and natures in Christ, and the events that came in their developments, were epochs in the history of man, producing new results and starting new processes. If a child's life, touching the earth like a feather, cannot be laid upon our planet without changing its equilibrium and making life here different from what it had been before, surely the life of Jesus Christ, the exhibition of God's nature in the life of man, must have opened new sources of power, and altered every life of man which should be lived upon the earth forever.

This is what we mean when we say that Christianity is an historical religion. Do you, a total stranger to our faith, ask what our faith is? We must first of all draw back a curtain; we must show you a Person, walking in certain fields still extant in the world's geography, treading on pavements which we still may tread, toiling up mountains and over plains where our feet still may struggle in their weariness — this Person at a certain recognizable time, a certain date, doing certain recorded acts, living a certain life,—Him we must point out to you and say: "He is our religion. That Christ is Christianity."

But then, when this bewilders you, when you seem to find it all so remote and long ago, when the historicalness of it all seems to take it outside of all your present needs, then is the time to tell you how the historic Christ is a perpetual Presence among

mankind, making His own record a living Power. The Christ of history becomes the Christ of the soul. The story becomes quickened by the actual presence of Him of whom the story tells. It is so wonderful! It is as if while I read the record of what the martyrs did, the very martyrs themselves were here looking me in the face, firing me with their actual enthusiasm, each of them, as he pointed to the picture of a deed, saying: "Yes, I did that by the power of God; and you can do it, too, for God is your God as truly as He was mine." How the two elements would work together! How the old past would live with the new present! How the power of history, and the power of an immediate inspiration, would minister to one another!

Now, that is the feeblest picture of the way in which, in Christianity, the historic Christ and the ever-present Christ become one power for the salvation of the soul. "I am he that liveth and was dead, and lo! I am alive for evermore." So Christ described Himself to John in Patmos. The "was dead" is history. Back comes the well-remembered scene of Calvary and the tomb in the garden. All the distinct facts that happened there come back, and "Lo, I am alive for evermore," makes those facts new, present realities to the soul which needs the assurance of the love, and the example of the patience, which were stored away in them centuries ago. The Christian reads his Bible, and the Christ beside him and the Christ within him make clear to him the soul of the Christ who walks and works and suffers in these blessed pages. That is the meeting

in oneness of the historic and the eternal Christ. The Christian presses the Bible to his heart, and deep utterances all his own, utterances of love and help and wisdom which have been kept in that Bible for him, unread by any other of the millions who have pressed it to their hearts, come forth at the summons of his Christ who lives in his soul, and give themselves at last to him for whom they have been waiting all these years.

To keep either one of the two aspects of our faith alone breaks its completeness, and so makes it weak. Some men and some ages have thought almost solely of its historic character. They have spent their devotion in the worship of its sacred places. They have sent Crusades for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre. They have travelled in long pilgrimages, that they might touch the ground on which the blessed feet of Christ trod. They have made the preservation of the forms of the earliest Church the object of their toils and prayers. They have clung to first statements of truth as if there were no living Spirit of Truth among men to-day. On the other hand, there have been ages and men to whom the historic character of Christianity has meant very little. To them the great Christian religion has found its only sanction in the present needs and instincts of the human soul. Christ has by them been hardly thought of as an actual being who once lived on earth. He has become a world-pervading Spirit, a name for all the upward forces of the soul of man, a dear conception of the present God.

We can see the danger of hardness and formalism

which must beset the first kind of men and ages. We can see the danger of vagueness and subjectivity which must beset the others. And we are right. The first men and ages have become hard and formal. The others have become vague and subjective. But the true faith has the defects and vices of neither, because it has the truth and excellence of both. It is sharp, clear, definite, objective; and yet is free and fresh and spiritual and different and new for every soul. Its Christ is there in Palestine, and yet here in the soul. He is all the more there because He is here, and all the more here because He is there. The inner pilgrimages, the visits of the weakened will for the recovery from its weakness to the holy places in the soul where Christ abides, are all the more vivid and real because of that voice which cries down out of history from the last day, that great day of the Feast, when a visible Saviour stood in the old Hebrew Temple and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And those venerable spots in Palestine are and have ever been the inspiration of mankind, because each new soul, as it became conscious of itself, found their spiritual geography repeated in itself, and all that once took place there taking place again and forever upon its little stage.

This is the complete Christianity. Let us beware lest in our lives it lose either of its two parts, and become incomplete. Let the voice, which summons us to be Christians, call us with both of these inspiring tones. "Come to Christ!" let it say; and let the Christ to whom it summons us be both the Christ of

history and the Christ forever manifest and powerful in the soul of man. Come to Him who lived in the blessed story of the Gospels. Come, and as truly as if you were Peter or John, make yourself His disciple and follower. Come to His manger-cradle, and adore the mystery of God made man. Come walk with Him and hear His teaching. Come to His Cross, and feel the rich power of the perfect Sacrifice. Do this really and definitely, so that when men ask you, when you ask yourself, "Who is your Master?" your glowing face shall turn, your eager finger shall point there, to the Man of the days in Palestine, to the summit of history where stand the shining feet of the Incarnate God.

And yet, let the cry, "Come to Christ," keeping this meaning, be to you also the summons to a present Righteousness and Love, to an immediate Divinity here at your side, here in your heart, whom you may hear speak words of loving wisdom which were never spoken to any ear before; let it be your Christ, who is the utterance of God's Love calling you and of your possibility of holiness. Let it be your Christ, to whom you come in answer to an invitation, in the claiming of a privilege, that is all your own.

Let us come back for a moment to where we began. Jesus Christ is taking leave of His disciples, and He says: "I have told you the truth. All the truth which you and they who come after you are to need forever, I have given you." And the disciples sit silent and awed, as men who hold mysterious, unopened treasures in their hands. And

then Christ goes on: "Not yet do you know, not yet can you know, all the rich meaning of what I have given you; but when the time shall come, then I will be with you, and we together will open these closed words of mine, and then all that is in them shall be yours."

Can we conceive a nobler, a more inspiring or gracious programme for human history than that? As the years have gone by, as again and again "the time has come," and the Christian world, the Christian Church, has "remembered that its Master told it of these things," and has seen the covering drawn back and the deeper meaning of some word of His made plain, and has known that it was by His present spirit that His historic word was being illuminated, has not His promise been fulfilled?

What "times shall come" in the future, who shall dare to say? We only know that the full time, the whole time, has not come yet. What light shall stream out of God's word, richening and deepening all the light that it has shown before; what the old ever-new story of the Gospels may have to say to the new needs of the men and the society and the nations which are yet to be, no man can presume to say. The new-old Christ in the old-new world!—can we not hear Him saying, as He repeats His precious truths: "These things have I told you, that ye may remember that I told you of them."

This makes the unity of the succeeding generations. To each of them the ever-present Christ opens something more of that treasury of truth and life which was enfolded in His historic Incarnation.

They are one with each other—the fathers, the mediævalists, the reformers — in their common loyalty to the Incarnate Lord and Master; while each lives his own life in that degree of the truth of the Lord and Master which has been made known to him.

And as between the ages, so between contemporary men. To each different soul among us different "time" has come, and with each "time" its own enlightenment. And yet all the enlightenments are broken lights of the "Light which lighteth every man." Shall we not all be one in Him, however each "cannot but speak those things which he hath heard and seen"?

There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. And yet each man is saved by Christ with his own appropriate salvation. Let us give ourselves to the eternal Christ, and then wait working, and work waiting, till, little by little, but ever more and more, He shall show us of His truth and lead us at last into whatever chamber of His righteousness He has made ready for our eternal home.

V.

INDESTRUCTIBLE POSSESSIONS.

"For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him."—PSALM xlix. 17.

IT is an old familiar story that David is singing over in his Psalm. He is talking about the worldly man, and the thought of him suggests, as it so often does, the coming close of earthly life. The time is fast approaching when the man of wealth and friends and bright, gay, shining circumstances, is to leave them all. He is to put his hand into the hand of a messenger who comes to summon him, and he is to go out naked into a new life where the things that have most illuminated his life here can have no possibility of existence. "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him." The rich man leaves his money. The famous man passes out of the sound of clapping hands. The Sybarite casts one look back on his soft cushions, and then goes down the dark, hard path.

It is one of the oldest of all the thoughts of man,—the separation of a man by death from what he has accumulated in his life. It has had most differ-

ent effects on different men. Some men it has paralyzed, as if there could be no use in winning what they must so soon lose. Other men it has filled with a feverish eagerness, and made them work with tenfold zeal, as if they must at once get all that they could get out of the things which were so soon to be taken from them. I hope that we can see that there is an influence more noble and more just which the certainty that death must separate us from many of the gains and treasures of our lives ought to have, and may have, upon us all.

And at the very outset we may notice that powerful as this conviction is, much as it weighs upon and influences our lives, it is not, and it evidently was not meant to be, the strongest or the most constant of the powers that influence men's minds. Another conviction—the conviction that it is good to accumulate the things which make life rich, that the enrichment of life is in itself a worthy desire for a human creature, even in spite of the certainty that it must soon be stripped away,—this conviction always comes in first, and will not let its brightness be blotted out by the shadow of the coming death. Surely there is something impressive and very significant in this.

You go to the merchant, toiling in his shop, piling his dollar on dollar, and before his eyes you lift the curtain that hangs only a few rods off and show him the inevitable future, his pile of money left behind him to be used in ways for which he does not care, ways which perhaps he hates, by people whose whole characters and habits laugh at the way in which

his money has been earned, and he looks up for a moment at your picture, shakes his head carelessly at it as if it were the picture of some other man, and then plunges his hands into his gold again and piles dollar upon dollar faster than ever, to make up for lost time. You make the idol of the people enter by anticipation into the silence of the land where the praise of fellow-man shall either never for a moment come, or, if it comes at all, shall only come to show its hollowness; and the flush dies out of his face, he turns pale for a moment, and then the hand is at the ear again that he may not lose one sweet echo of the people's shouts. The plodder over books, the hoarder of mere facts who never gets at principles, catches one glimpse of the land where principles are to be the only wealth, and, with just a passing tremble of dismay, goes back again to piling up his ant-hill. No certainty of the coming abandonment of gains can overcome the passion for acquisition in the soul of man.

Surely this means something. It must mean that the passion for acquisition must be taken into account, must be accepted as a perpetual fact, and somehow made to live in peace and co-operation with the other fact of the necessary separation from their acquisitions which death brings to men. To put these two truths into their true relation to each other, to let neither of them kill the other—this must be our study. For truths, we know, are like the wheels in a machine. They are fitted and toothed to one another. If they are kept with their teeth properly intertwined, they keep each other in

motion and help each other work; but if they fall out of their true connection, then they tear each other and disturb and spoil the whole machine. To see how these two facts—the fact of man's passion for acquisition and the fact of man's inevitable loss of that which he acquires—fit together and make a strong and healthy human life: this will be our object.

I know I speak to thoughtful men, who are aware of both these facts in their own active lives. You all know and feel in some way the human desire to gain the good things of life; and yet you all know well enough that those good things will hardly be gained before you will have to give them up. Generally the first knowledge is most vivid, and you live in its sunshine. But every now and then the second knowledge sweeps over you like a cloud and hides the sun. Will it not be a gain if the two knowledges can be taught to take each other's hands and walk together, and lead your life, perpetually aware of both of them, into more peaceful and so more powerful activity?

Perhaps we can reach our subject best if we think not immediately of death, but of some other conceivable event which might be seen approaching, and which, when it arrived, must strip from every man his earnings. Suppose for instance that all men could foresee that, at a certain (or an uncertain) future time, there was coming a great triumph of communism, with a division of all property and the abolishment of private rights. What would be the result of such anticipation? I suppose that there

are two principal results, one or the other of which we should see in different men according to their different characters. One class of men would think only of getting all out of the present which they could. "Well, since so soon we are to have nothing," they would say, "let us make the most of what we can have now. Let us enjoy the present to the full." Another class would be so wrapt up in the prospect of the coming catastrophe that all chance of enjoying the present would be ruined. "If all is to be stripped away, what is the use of winning anything?" they would ask. These two classes everybody would expect to see,—one of them the class that tries to forget the coming loss in the excess of present joy, the other losing all sense of present ownership in the certainty of coming loss.

But think about it a moment, and see if there is not a third kind of man, who is at least conceivable. In that community which is living under the shadow of the impending communism would there not be here and there a wise and thoughtful man who would be saying to himself: "I cannot live only in the present, and I cannot be apathetic, in despair. I must work. I must accumulate. But what is there which I can accumulate which the communistic tyranny, when it arrives, cannot disturb?" And when he asks that, can you not see how at once there must open to him all the great regions of profounder and truer possessions which no redistribution of property can take away? There are gains won in the business of a true man's life which would be

just as truly his after the mob had passed through the town, and turned him out of his house, and made him share his fortune with the thieves. There is a property so private that no legislation, no revolution, can disturb it.

Suppose that a man demanded of his business that it should furnish him with that. Suppose that, out of all his gaining and spending, he compelled himself to win breadth and loftiness of character, patience, value for the spirits and not the forms of things, a soul superior to the very ministries and machineries by which the superiority of soul was won; and have you not got in that man a real co-operation in their best result of our two truths,—the truth, first, that man must accumulate, and the truth, second, that the things which he accumulates he must part with by and by? Picture the business man thus earning wealth, in distinct view of the certainty that he is going to lose it. He presses each dollar till it yields him moral quality. He stows away into his character patience and perseverance. In earning wealth he learns the limits of what wealth can do, and so a justness and loftiness of soul is bred within him. By and by comes the great crash, and when men look to see him stripped as naked as his most thriftless brethren, behold! the very loss of his property has only made it more evident how thoroughly he is still the possessor of all the moral qualities which came to him in the winning of his property. The whirlwind itself seems to look back at him amazed, for, where it expected to see him lying a ruin upon the ground, there he stands,

stripped of his leaves indeed, but all the more evidently alive with a life, rich with a riches, which it is in no power to destroy.

Now, try to carry all that over and apply it to men's anticipation of death. Death is the great communism. It levels all our human greatnesses. Here they are, beggar and prince to-day, one strutting over velvet, the other grovelling in the mire; to-morrow both together ashes to ashes, dust to dust. On this side of the grave are scholar and dunce, one crowned with all the honors of the schools, the other wearing life out in a drudgery only better than the brutes; on the other side, both alike in the common ignorance of forgetfulness. How natural, how familiar all that sounds! We have heard it all our lives; and oh, how superficial it all is! How it ignores everything except the most manifest and material of human acquisitions!

Thank God, the inequalities of wealth are not to go beyond the grave! Thank God, the rich man's insolence and the poor man's servility alike are to be known no longer in the New Jerusalem! But the rich man's self-control and the poor man's self-respect—a self-control plucked out of the very heart of luxury, a self-respect gathered out of the very mire of men's contempt—what has the grave to say to them? The scholar's love for truth, the unselfishness which the servant of the people has learned in his long years of applauded or unapplauded public life,—when these shine out all the more brightly in the Everlasting Life, just because the special subject of the scholar's study has been left behind

among the outgrown interests of earth, and the temporary interests which engaged the powers of the public man have been drowned in the crossing of the river,—shall it not then be clear enough how the truth of necessary acquisition, and the truth of the necessary loss of the acquired thing, have worked together?

And this is the result—a deeper acquisition, an acquisition of character. When a man has made his life render that to him, then he has got down into a deeper region, or up into a higher one, where the words which David spoke, in the ordinary middle region of human experience and thought, are no longer true. He has come into that higher world where death has lost his victory. The man does carry something away with him when he dieth. The true glory of his life does follow him. What was true below is no longer true when the man has risen to the larger conception and larger use of life.

I think I know the difficulty which will suggest itself in view of thoughts like these. It will seem as if the perpetual treatment of present life with reference to the life which is to come would give a sort of unreality to living which would destroy all its pleasure, and defeat at once its higher and its lower purposes. It would seem to threaten us with that "other-worldliness," as it has been called,—that loss of the best uses of this world in the morbid expectation of the next, which has been often alleged by unchristian people to be the natural tendency of Christianity.

But here comes in a truth of experience, which

has always seemed to me to be one of the most beautiful and suggestive indications of the care that God has for the good growth of His children. I think that all experience bears witness that the healthy and sincere use of any of God's blessings which are in their nature temporary and partial, has a tendency to prepare the man who uses them for higher fields of life in which he shall have outgone them and left them behind. The hearty enjoyment of a bright clear day makes a man not less, but more, ready for those exacting duties in which the sensibilities are too weak to support us, and the conscience must be summoned to its bravest work. The grateful and loving acceptance of pleasure as the gift of God is all the time, unconsciously, without the happy mortal's thinking of it, stocking his life with the faith which he will need when he has to leave the happiness behind and go forth into some dark sorrow. The soul which God allows to bask in friendships gathers in them the qualities which, when the friendships are stripped off from it, it carries with it into the unfriended and solitary years which lie beyond. A true and simple childhood ceases, but the grown-up man wonders to find that it has left in him an unexpected faith and strength for the emergencies of manhood. Everywhere we see some glimpses of this gracious law—that he who lives nobly and simply and devoutly in any condition which is by its very nature temporary, accumulates unconsciously in it the outfit which he is going to need for the higher and more exacting life into which he is by and by called to pass.

Now, if this same law can apply between the worlds, do you not see what its results will be? Just as you live in the pure pleasure of a glorious day, gratefully and simply taking its joys and duties at the hand of God, and never thinking about to-morrow, but when to-morrow comes, lo, here in you is the health which you never sought, but which you all the time were winning on that glorious yesterday; —so let the mortal live here in the most pure and healthy enjoyment of this glorious world, let him take every duty, let him take every joy in the most simple loyalty and love, not thinking of a world to come, thinking only of this world and of how full it is of God, and of how good it is to live, and to work, and to touch these lives of our brethren with the delightful contacts of our different relationships all met and filled out with the most faithful faithfulness that we can render; let a man live so, and then some morning let the gates of immortality fly open, and the freed soul pass through into the larger life; and then how glorious does the working of the law become. The public servant, the business man, the student, the mechanic—how completely he has left his desk, his shop, his books, his tools behind! But, as he stands on the other side, for a moment almost at a loss for them, how the chorus of qualities which has been trained within him by his long service lifts up its voice and greets him: "Lo, we are with you still! Lo, we have crossed the river with you and still are with you! We, too, are breathing this celestial air, and we, like you, are finding ourselves filled to our noblest and completest

being by it. We shall be ready, we who were with you on the earth,—patience and courage, and hope and truth and humbleness,—we shall be ready here for all the larger work that you will need us for."

Can you imagine that? and then can you imagine that man, entered on his immortality, with all his company of earth-trained helpers, looking back to earth and seeing those whom he has left behind still in the midst of this intense, delightful life, with the river still uncrossed? Can you not hear what his voice would say to them? "Be pure and faithful," —so the dead would speak to the living; "love God and do your duty. Enjoy life purely and faithfully. Do not think of Eternity in any way which shall make Time less full of eagerness and delight. Be pure and faithful, and when you come to the river all that you need to have go over will go over in you. And you will never miss what cannot cross with you, but must be left behind because its day is over."

It is not hard, I am sure, to imagine that, as a liberated human spirit spoke those words to the spirits which were still upon the earth, still in the body, he would be conscious of a double joy: first, of a joy to know that what he really needed in eternity of all that he had gained on earth—his qualities and character—were with him still; but also, secondly, another joy at his release even from those things in many of which, while he was still in mortal life, he found much of the joy of living.

Oh, my dear friends, are there not times when all of us have realized that there is another tone in

which those words of David about the dying man—"He carrieth nothing away with him when he dieth," meaning, as David certainly did mean, the mere conditions and machineries of life,—that there is another tone in which those words of David may be said, a tone of triumph and congratulation? How many there are, even of things which we have deeply loved and earnestly enjoyed of which we feel that this life has given us enough, and that we do not want to see them any more upon the other side! How many of the complicated ways of business and society, much as our hearts are bound up in them now, we are rejoiced to know will disappear in the simplicity of heaven! How often, when we are in the midst of the elaborate conventionalities of social life, or planning and planning how to make and spend our money, or pondering upon the complex workings of government, or sitting on a charity committee, or attending a general convention, the words come to us like a great wave of comfort: "When you die, you shall carry nothing of all this away with you"! To get the kernel some day safely out of the shell and throw the shell away—who does not sometimes long for that? And when it comes, who does not dare to believe that, however happy the shell may have made him in its growing, it will be easy enough to let it go when, in its going, the kernel which has grown within it comes forth in its preciousness and glory?

Have we not then come to some meeting of these two truths—man's ineradicable love of acquisition, and the certainty that much of what he acquires

must be speedily abandoned? Here is this other truth—that in every legitimate acquisition of man, if it be won in the loftiest and truest way, there is something that comes into the man himself, which is utterly beyond the power of death to destroy, and must go wherever the man goes, and shall last while he shall last. Out of the king's reigning something comes into the king, out of the beggar's begging something comes into the beggar; and that shall be somewhere, wherever king or beggar is, long after the king's throne has its new tyrant and another beggar crouches in the dust where this forgotten one used to crawl.

And the issue of this fuller truth in practical conduct, as I have tried to show, will be that the truest life must be that which most healthily enjoys and most faithfully uses the earth and its conditions. In it the completest preparation is being made for the great inevitable change. Surely no man ever more faithfully lived this earthly life than Jesus Christ did, and yet none was ever readier to lay it away and go to the Father. In Him the two principles worked in perfect harmony. And all the noblest and completest natures have been marked by the union and harmony of these two facts; first, that they most intensely enjoyed and worked in life; and, second, that they were readiest, when the time came, to change this life for what we call "the other."

The relation between man and life—that is what we have been studying. How low and base and degrading that relation may be made, we know full

well. We have seen it all our lives. We can see it any day. Men who, when they first touched life, seemed to be all fresh and pure, by and by see how they are walking as if they had waded through mire, all smirched and stained and blackened with the wickedness which they have attracted out of life. Man and Life—how we come to feel that one means the power of being tempted and soiled, and the other means the great reservoir of temptation and pollution out of which no human being can fail to gather degradation as his time goes on. But there come moments when we are able to take larger views, moments when we are able to look back to the first ideas of Man and Life as they existed in the mind of God at the beginning, and to look forward to the Restoration or the Redemption of those ideas by Christ.

Their Redemption by Christ! Do we know fully what that means? It means the reclaiming of the world, or of a man, for the completest being of which he is capable, by the power of Him who manifested the Love of God in all the sincerity and persuasion of His deadly suffering upon the earth. You belonged to God. You were by your first idea His servant and His child. Christ came to claim you for the God to whom you belonged, to make you know, to force and crowd it home upon you so that you could not help knowing, that you were His child; and then to turn this whole world into a great nursery for His child's education.

If that could be completely done, if you and the world about you could be so redeemed, then, is it

not evident that all this which I have been trying to describe must come to pass? The very type of a being living in the present, using it enthusiastically and never making any plans beyond it, but yet gathering out of it the very best sort of preparation for the unopened future, is found in the happy and obedient child, living loyally in his father's house, and gathering every day into his nature unconscious preparation for the years to come. What does the boy of fourteen know about the anxieties and cares of forty? When does he stop to think whether he will be ready for the cares and anxieties of forty, when it comes? And yet when, by and by, he crosses that critical line which seems to carry him into another world, it is what he has gathered unconsciously in his father's house that he carries with him to be his equipment in the untried years.

Now, the Redemption of Christ makes men, as I have said, know that they are, and so makes them practically to be, God's children. It transforms the world into God's house. What it does, then, for us, is to make us repeat in our life this experience of childhood. For us, too, living in Christ's Redemption, each present, thankfully accepted and conscientiously used, becomes the preparation for greater things to come. Out from each period, into the period which waits beyond, we carry the personal qualities which have been born in us as we lay upon the bosom of His Fatherhood. And at the last, when we die, the leaving of all earthly circumstances behind only makes more absolutely clear to us that the new world to which we go is part of the same

Father's house; and that we who go there carry our perpetual childhood to the same Father to whom Christ has redeemed and reconciled us here.

This ought to come with great assurance and comfort to those of you who have watched the dying of your friends. Some busy man, right by your side, in the full current of activity, has seen the inevitable summons and dropped the tools of life and gone away. The day after he is buried, you walk through his empty house. There is all that used to identify him to you. The shelves are crowded with the books he loved. The furniture is full of memories of him. Signs of his wealth and tokens of his taste are everywhere. The clothes he wore still keep his shape. The instruments with which he worked have hardly yet grown cold. Some friend beside you says: "Poor fellow, it was very hard to leave all this! How he worked for it all! How he enjoyed it all! And now he has left it all behind! David was right; when he died, he did, indeed, carry nothing away."

But then, if you have got hold of our truth, does not your heart perhaps remonstrate: Nay, for this man David was not right; David was wrong! Did he really carry nothing away,—he who went into the mysterious world beyond, rich in wisdom, patience, and trust, with purity that had been tried and whitened in the fire, with a judgment enlarged and a soul ripened by countless struggles? Has he carried nothing,—he who goes wrought and kneaded through and through with the certainty that he is God's child, which he has gained out of a thousand

quiet communions with his Father, and a hundred terrible emergencies when he has had to cling to his Father's Fatherhood with desperate hands? Does he carry nothing—he who carries the new self which was born in the new birth?

There are times when the old chant changes; when, not that man leaves everything behind him, but that man takes everything with him, becomes the certainty that fills our souls as we hear the step of Death coming to call us or to call our brethren away.

How terrible that certainty is! How glorious that certainty is! How it makes any patient and conscientious work, as one tries to do it here in Christ's name, shine with all the radiance of eternity! "Work on," one wants to cry to all true workers, "work on with all your might. No matter whether you seem to succeed or seem to fail, no matter whether men give you praise or blame. You are gathering character. You are becoming more and more a child of God. And when the call comes, though the work must all be left, the worker will go on and up, carrying with him all that the grace and goodness of God has made him be."

May the hope of that day, and of all that lies beyond it, strengthen our hearts and hands when they grow weak!

VI.

THE NECESSITY OF THE SOCIAL LIFE.

"Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up."—Ecclesiastes iv. 10.

These words of the preacher are capable of a low or of a very high application. We may read them as the words of worldly prudence, the exhortation to every man to make to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; or they may be the utterance of the profoundest religious philosophy, the statement of how God Himself has bound our lives together and made us rest on one another. Of course we give to them their highest meaning.

And the words begin by assuming the certainty that every man will fall sometimes. "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth." We look forward into our lives, and a wise prudence compels us to recognize that there will certainly come times when life will flag, times when the buoyancy and courage upon which we rely will break, when over some one of the many obstacles that lie in our way we shall stumble. We need not be gloomy prophets. We need not put so blankly and hopelessly before ourselves the certainty of these times of faltering

courage and of weakened principle, that we shall be in despair and not try to do anything for the lives that are so sure to meet disaster. But, on the other hand, it would be foolish in us to expect an even, level, unbroken future, a changeless prosperity and spiritual progress that never know a fall. Surely our darker and despondent days will come, our days of broken resolution and of feebler will.

And when we thus look forward to them, among the questions which we ask ourselves ought to be these: "What will the best way be to meet those days? How shall I best prepare for them? How shall I best recover myself? Will it be best for me to be alone, or to be in company when the darkness comes? Will a close association with my brethren help me up, or hold me down with all their extra weight, when I have fallen?"

It opens a wide question and a very deep one, the whole question of the social and the solitary life. Here are certain dispositions always drawing us to one another. Here are certain dissatisfactions always drawing us away from one another and making us want to live alone. Here is the sense that our brethren make safety about us and call out our best powers into exercise. Here is another sense that our brethren around us make our danger, and that our best powers and activities often spring to life and do their work when we are separated and set all by ourselves. Which shall we follow? The practical answer that we mostly give is in a vacillating life which divides itself almost at random between the two dispositions, yielding sometimes to

one and sometimes to the other, as the feeling moves; and often yielding wrongly, looking often to society for that culture which only solitude can give, and also often seeking in loneliness that strength which a man ought to get out of the company of his fellow-men.

Let us look a little at this question of society and solitude. It is not enough to give the easy answer that society is good or bad according to whom it is composed of; to be with good men is good for us; to be with bad men is bad for us. That is true, of course. But still the difficulty remains that the societies which offer themselves to us are not thus blankly good or bad. They are all mingled and confused. And even between the best company and solitude the question is always an open one. How far is it best to fight the battle of one's life alone, and how far is it good to identify our battle with our brethren's, and get the advantage of their strength, even with all the disadvantage that it brings? Surely there are few questions which we ever meet more pressing or more puzzling than these.

The first suggestion of an answer comes from our own experience, from what we may freely appeal to as the universal experience of healthy-minded men; which is that whatever there is of good in us has been made possible and has been preserved by the associations with our fellow-men which have filled up our life. However deeply precious may seem the things that have come to us when we were alone; however we may know that the choicest

thoughts and truest feelings have been worked out in solitude; everybody is certain, as he takes a large look back, that, on the whole, if he had been left to solitude he never could have come to so good life as he has reached in the company of his brethren. And the reason why he thinks so is, in large part, that he sees that in his darkest times, in the falling and fallen periods of his life, he could not have arisen from the depths into which he had been cast, he would have stayed at his worst, if it had not been for the rescue that came to him from his fellow-men. Perhaps there are great heights where a man may be independent, mountain-tops where one may walk in solitude. Perhaps there are exalted moments in which one seems to live his best, and not to need companions; but what we come to thank our fellow-men most for is the way in which they have bridged over with their company the uncertain places of life, and brought us up again when we were demoralized and broken down, that we have not been alone when we have fallen, but have had another to lift us up.

For what is it that keeps a man down when he has fallen out of goodness and self-respect? When the spring of his life is broken and the fresh hopefulness of the manly struggle to be high and pure and good is blurred and lost, when he has sinned and the burden of his sin is lying on him, what is it that keeps him down? What hinders him from springing back again into the strength and purity which he has lost? Mainly these things: first, his self-indulgence, the dreadful indolence and force of

habit that takes possession of him; secondly, his loss of reputation, the feeling that nobody expects or thinks anything of him any longer; thirdly, his conceit and affectation, which take his sin and disgrace and trick it out in some disguise of virtue or brilliancy, and set him to boasting of it. Picture any fallen man, a man who used to be brave and good and sober and honest. Now he has gone. You never see him in the paths of reputable people. Men look to him no more for examples of upright living. What has caused all this? He came to some bad place. He sinned. He fell into disgrace. And the powers that have held him down, that have stereotyped and perpetuated his disaster, have been these: He has grown self-indulgent in his sin, with no enterprise or energy to rise up and cast it off; he has ceased to care what men think about him; and, having lost everything else to be proud of, he has grown proud of his disgrace, making believe to himself that it is honorable.

Now all those are powers, as you will recognize, which fasten themselves upon a man in solitude. There he becomes self-indulgent, morose, and affected. But now suppose that that man, when he fell, had had a friend, one who really had been close to him. What would that friend have done for him? or, rather, what would a body of such friends have done for him, surrounding him on every side, enclosing, enshrining his tottering life? They would have shamed and encouraged him out of self-indulgence. They would have let him see that they did care for him, and so kept him from being reckless

about reputation. They would have held up before him the truth and righteousness from which he had departed, and made him know that his wickedness was base and not glorious. Hope, pride, and honesty,—these are what they would have given him. These are what your friendships have given you many a time, and kept your falls from being fatal and final, and held you to recovery.

This is the reason of it. Now, that which is reasonable and capable of philosophic explanation in the middle orders, in the mass of beings, appears always as an instinct which it is hard to explain, both in the lower beings, who seem to be below the range of its influence, and in the highest beings, who seem to be above its need. Man gets a clear and accountable help out of the companionship of his fellow-men in his darkened and weakened times; and it is good to see how this impulse of companionship plays freely from the bottom to the very top of all life. The animals crowd close together when the thunder roars, as if in company there would be safety. And when Jesus Christ was going to his agony in Gethsemane, He took with Him Peter and James and John. It is the social impulse running through all life, and making each try to appropriate for his own the strength of all.

I want to urge on all of you, the young and old, but specially the young, the good, nay, the necessity, of social life. Do not yield to the passion for solitude. Knit your life to your brothers' lives. Cultivate every true relation to your fellow-men. If, when things are going wrong with you either by

misfortune or by sin, the desire springs up to live alone, to get away from men, beware how you indulge it. You will certainly grow self-indulgent and reckless and affected. That is where the indolent, cynical, headlong, and fantastic men are made. Not more than one man in a thousand, perhaps not so many, can live in solitude and yet be vigorous, self-respecting, simple. It needs a man of such wonderfully exceptional resource and truthfulness to be shut up to himself!

It may seem as if this were not the counsel that men need. "Rather urge solitude," you say. "People are social over-much. They grow thin and superficial. Send them apart to think, and let them dwell alone that their own selves may be developed. There is too much society." But so often we have seen the man in his misfortune shut himself away, and lose the fibre and recovery of life, that there does seem need to urge the preserving and recuperative power of a true social life.

A true social life!—remember that that does not mean what often passes for society. The ordinary contacts of men in business, whose knowledge of and care for one another is limited to their mere business interests, who never talk anything but business; and the frivolous meetings of what we call fashionable life;—these are not true companionship. Out of their very midst a man or woman falls, and they have no power of help. The dumb company of brute with brute in a pasture or a barnyard, their stolid huddling to each other's sides, means more of real association than much that we call social life.

But the true society, in which man really meets with man, and mind with mind, and heart with heart, and character with character—that is another thing, a thing you cannot do without. As you shun the false, so seek the true. Draw really near your fellows, and do not live alone.

Let me refer in a few words to some of the conditions in which the tendency to solitude is apt to assert itself most strongly, and ask you to observe how bad it is. It often becomes strong in periods of doubt. When truth appears unsettled to a man, and he is all adrift, how apt he is to let his life float away into some solitary creek, and there to moor it and let it toss on the waves till it decays. He draws off from the crowd of busy and believing men, and spends his days in moody uselessness, brooding upon himself. Would we were not so familiar with the sad consequences! First, a dull and hopeless indolence, which tells itself over and over that it is not worth while to seek for truth; then a definite disregard whether men think that it is good to believe or not; and then an affected eccentricity which wears its skepticism like a plume. Now set that same doubter in the midst of men and keep him there. I do not say, let him take their faith for his, but let him see that faith, and faith alone, is doing work and making men brave and happy everywhere; and he must lose at least the wretchedest part of unbelief, and come to know that truth is good, and to be sure that men can find it, and to set himself with new courage to the generous and glorious search.

And so, when a man undertakes to think. Is it not true that all solitary thinking has a tendency to grow hopeless and defiant and fantastic? The best and truest Christian thoughts, the sweetest, the healthiest, the best balanced, have come not from the hermits or the monks, but from the heart of Christian society and work; where men and women living Christian lives held up the thinker in his feebler moods, and made him earnest, simple, practical. No man by nature thinks so truly and so surely that you could send him off alone, and let him come back after years, and not be sure that his thoughts would have grown self-indulgent, conceited, and distorted.

Or, take the great emotional epochs of one's life. In times of strong emotion there comes the strong impulse to break away from and have no more to do with a world whose ordinary doings seem to be so far below the high condition to which we have been brought. It may be hard for you to recollect it now, but you have seen such times. In great and overwhelming joy it comes. What can this dull earth, living its placid life of averages, know about this leaping delight which has transfigured everything for you? How coldly it answers to your ecstasies! These people take your hand and say to you, "I am glad for you"; but what has their sober, indifferent gladness to respond to these full veins and eager hopes of yours?

Or, here comes sorrow, and the impulse then is stronger still. This ache about the heart, this sense of want which does not relieve itself in any effort to

restore that dear thing which must be forever wanting, this desolation which is as personal and all your own as was the love which made it possible,—why should this stay here in the crowd, where the kindest hands touch it only to make it ache a little more? Why should it listen to a sympathy which only brushes and wounds its surface? Why should not such a sorrow creep away and hide where none can gaze upon it, nor try to comfort it; where it can live on its own luxury of woe?

O my dear friends, I know how natural are both desires; but indeed it is not good to yield to either of them. Your joy and sorrow will be strong and healthy only as you keep them among your brethren. Do not try to carry them away. It is no superficial impulse which sometimes drives the very happy or the very sorrowful into the presence and the company of men. There, their happiness and sorrow are held in place, held firm and upright, so that the new life which grows about them grows straight and true. Both into the Mountain of Transfiguration and into the Garden of Agony Christ took with him Peter and James and John; and surely He took them not for their sake alone but also for His own.

So everywhere dread and escape a lonely life. Even the frivolous companionships of men have a humanity about them which is preservative, and are better than solitude. The worst, certainly the most persistent and ineradicable, of vices, are those which men conceive and execute alone. It is the social life that holds the soul in its true place. I know you will not think that I have pleaded in behalf of

social life just as it is, in behalf of what you call Society, with all its follies and its falsenesses, but in behalf of something far deeper and far higher.

And now we want, if we can, to separate these two—the ideal and the real society—and see if we can tell at all how the man who must live with his fellow-men may find the way of living with them that shall be most unmixed with harm. If, then, we try to estimate the tendencies of social life, I think that the one which would strike us all most generally would be its disposition to produce uniformity, to keep at once the bad from sinking as low, and the good from rising to as lofty a height, as would be the case if their lives were wholly by themselves and wholly free. Social life is something like a sheet of ice upon the surface of a pond. It holds up the stones which are frozen in it so that they shall not sink, and it holds down the light, ambitious particles so that they shall not start up and soar away into the clouds. As we look round upon the actual life of society, can we not all see both of these powers at work? We shall see some men of whom we feel sure that, if the restraints and decencies of social life were broken up, they would drop like lead. They are held out of wickedness by the standards and habits of the times and places where they live. And then there are other men who, you fear, are held back from any great and venturesome enterprise, from any exceptional characteristic virtue, by these same restraints. If they were living alone, you feel certain that they would break out into lofty thoughts and blaze into original and

splendid works, which are impossible here in this average of life.

Very often this equalizing, levelling power of social life vexes and burdens us. It gives an unreal look to people's virtues. Who knows whether they are essentially, intrinsically good? Who knows whether they be not stones which, if the ice were melted, would fall and sink? And it leaves us always in doubt how much we may be losing in the remarkable men or actions which society is stifling. We have this same feeling about ourselves. We are not doing our worst; and though our best may not be much we are not doing even that. We are living a level decency, a tame monotony and uniformity. Society seems to be pressed flat and thin between two great hands; one pressing up from beneath and keeping the failures of society from falling very low; the other pressing down from above, and keeping the saints and heroes of society from rising very high.

Do you recognize the description? And what shall save us from the evil influence without losing for us the good? What shall set us free to be our best, and yet preserve the power which keeps us from being our worst? Not a moody retirement, a selfish isolation, but a higher consecration; not solitude, but some companionship higher and larger than our companionship with fellow-man, and yet including it, not inconsistent with it. And that must be a consecration to and a companionship with God. Sometimes, unless our lives have been exceptionally unhappy, we have seen a man or woman who seemed to us to almost realize an ideal of living;

some one who lived in the world and yet was not its slave, who seemed to get out of society all the good it had to give, and leave its harm behind. While other men said, "This is all worthless and rotten," and went off to crunch the crust of their own solitude, he staid where they had fled and ate the food which they called poison and throve upon it. It seemed as if for him the upward pressure on society was kept, so that it was a constant safeguard to him; and the downward pressure was removed, so that he could always freely go forth and be his best.

You who know it most thoroughly will bear me witness that there are not many such men or women in our social life. But there are some; and what is their secret? How does it come that they move free and erect where we go slavishly crouching? Is it not simply this: that over and above, surrounding and including all their life with fellow-men, there is a life with God? That consecration overrules every devotion to society. All social relations come as His helps and ordinances; and so, just as the business man, doing his business for a purpose beyond his business, gets from his business its rich cultures, and goes unpoisoned by its lower influences; so the man or woman of society, living a life with God above and round the life with fellow-men, finds in this last a steady support and help, and yet never a restraint to bind the soul from any most ambitious and characteristic flight to which God beckons it.

This is the secret. This was what made the social life of Jesus Christ the absolutely perfect type of a

man's living with his fellow-men. He came as close to them as possible; but always He was closer to His Father. He loved them, but He loved God more, and them in God. He loved the places where they gathered, but when He sat among them in the very centre of their densest crowds, through the people who pressed around Him there came like an unseen ether the subtler spiritual presence of God. It was not that He sat there touching them but not thinking about them, present in body but absent in the spirit. He was close to them; closer than man ever came to men. But through them came to Him the farther and deeper companionship of God. And so the result was that, while they helped His life, they never hampered it; while from them and His work for them He drew the stimulus that kept Him from discouragement, He constantly outwent them. All was free, upon the upper side, for Him to pass out into the company of God.

I think that this should be the picture of all social life. I have said that you ought not to live alone. Indeed you ought not. You ought to live with your brethren, as close to them, as clearly in the midst, as you can get. But to live with them rightly, you must have the secret which Christ had, the secret of a companionship with God surrounding and pervading all your companying with your brethren. Unless you have that, you will be bound by the society that saves you; and while your social life preserves you from flagrant wickedness, it will also imprison you from active and enterprising goodness.

And here comes in a word upon the other side, a

word to those who make as well as to those who receive the influences of social life. It is the object of true social life to keep men from sin, and to help them to their best development. It is a question for you all to ask how far social life, as it exists among us, is doing both these things. That it is doing the first to some good extent, I freely grant. It is setting the weak wills and unstable passions of many young people into the stability of its fixed standards, and saving them from flagrant vice by its prescriptive decencies. Is it doing the other thing as well? Is it helping every character to its own best development? Is it so free upon the upper side that any man or woman fired by some new impulse to do a work for God that is new, fresh, sincere, and personal may do it with the cordial encouragement of a society that delights to see any man lead the way to some goodness better than its own? As society stamps some vices as disgraceful, has it no tendency to stamp some virtues as quixotic? As one young person after another comes into it, is he met at its door by the spirit of the society which he is entering, saying to him: "You must not do foul and dishonest things here, for they are disgraceful; but you may be just as good, as pure, as truthful, as Christlike as you will, and we will like you all the better." Is it not rather a spirit saying something like this: "You must not lie or steal or be wantonly foul here, for it is vulgar; but, just as much, you must not be overgood, nor say too much of Christ, nor think too much of God, nor strike any new or original note of manliness and truth, for it is troublesome.

Here are our iron plates, indicating the greatest virtue and the greatest vice allowable. Lay yourself here between them, and the softer you are the sooner we will press you into shape." It becomes those who have influence and leadership in our society, to ask which of these is the greeting with which the newcomer is welcomed to the coveted and crowded halls.

All that I have said about life in general has its peculiar application to the Christian life. There, too, there is a solitary and a social way of living; and there, too, the social life is necessary for the fullest health and steadiness. A man becomes a Christian. The Bible calls that, as you know, his being "born again." His life begins—the life with Christ, the life in God. How shall he live that life—alone, as if there were no soul but his attempting it; drawing its strength and its supply only out of its own personal relations with its great Supplier? Sometimes such solitude is forced upon the Christian. Sometimes the world of fellow-believers seems to fall away and leave him travelling alone a road that seems to stretch itself on and on as if no feet had ever trod that path before him. But the Christian life was not meant to live in such a solitude forever, nor is it suited to it. It is a social life. All its movements suggest and prophesy a brotherhood. That Brotherhood of Believers is the Christian Church.

Now, the Christian Church is to the single disciple what all society is to the solitary man, only upon a

higher plane. We have said that society keeps men from indolent self-indulgence, from defiant recklessness, and from affectation; and that, the more I watch it, seems to me just what the Church does for the Christian. You are a servant of Christ. I may believe it, though you never said it, though your faith never took any of those great sacramental utterances which would send it in to swell the chorus of all the Christian faith in all the ages. You say, "Why should I take any place in the visible Church? What have I to do with Baptism, Confirmation, Communion?" It ought to make you solemn when you remember how earnestly, how impressively, how lovingly, in the very last precious moments of His precious life, your Lord commanded—nay, begged—you to do what you have never done. It ought to stir your conscience when you see this world, which needs your Christian influence, robbed of it by your silence. But I put all that aside. I speak to you only of yourself. If this unuttered faith of yours is always growing sluggish, losing its manly courage, making excuses for itself; if it is self-asserting, scornful of the judgments and holy standards of the world's long Christian experience; if it loves eccentricity and affects singularity; be sure here is what you need,—to set that feeble, fluttering, fantastic faith of yours into the Body of the Faith which is historic, old as the Lord's own words, and yet forever new as the experience of the last young believer,—to put your solitude into the safety of a society, to enshrine your Christianity in the Church.

The Church, like all true society, is strength, but it is not restraint. If she becomes restraint, she loses her true character. The ideal Church is one that shall hold her children strongly on the lower side, and set them free as heaven on the upper side; keep them that they do not fall into sin, but hold her doors wide open,—nay, cast her roof away that they may rise to any unexpected goodness or truth to which their Lord, for whom she holds them, may summon them. For the strength and safety of the faith you have, for the hope and promise of the higher faith that you might have, the higher life that you might live, I stand, as it were, at the door of that Church, and in the name of your Master and mine, I invite you to enter in.

We look around, and all the world is full of fellowship. Solitude is everywhere unnatural and bad. All things seek their companionships. The atoms gravitate to masses everywhere. And so men seek each other. The impulse is so superficial often; but it might be so profound! Let us not trifle with so vast and universal a desire as this which brings us into constant fellowship. Not for mere pastime or amusement, not by vague instinct, but by reasonable purpose, let us have to do with each other's life. Living in society, yet always keeping clear our own personality within all, and the higher companionship of God around all; helping and being helped; steadying ourselves on others, and helping up others as they fall, while all together we are going on to Christ; —if that should come, all the old questions between

society and the Church would be settled forever. Such a society as that would be the Christian Church. We could not be too deeply in the very centre of a society like that. Its light would be the present glory, its music the present voice, of God; and already in this city of the earth we should be living in the New Jerusalem.

VII.

LIVING EPISTLES.

"Ye are our epistle, . . . known and read of all men."—II. CORINTHIANS iii. 2.

"To be is more than to seem,"—so runs the substance of many maxims which are faithfully taught to the young as they go forth into life, and with which we both rebuke ourselves and console ourselves as need requires. No doubt the substance of such maxims is absolutely true. No doubt it is desirable that they should be constantly repeated. The condition of a nature, not the impression which the nature makes on other people, is the thing of primary importance, the thing on which attention must be fastened.

And yet such maxims do not tell all the truth. Always subordinate to our Being, our Seeming has its true importance. What we are in ourselves comes first; then what we are in relation to, in influence upon, our fellow-creatures demands its measure of regard. The outward movement, the expression of that which is essential, is too universal not to require our thought. The shining of the sun, the flowing of the river, the singing of the birds, fill the whole natural world with utterance.

In ordinary human life action stands waiting at the gates of every thought and of every spiritual condition, to make proclamation of it and to carry it forth in visible result.

When we come to the Supreme Being, it is truest there. God is and God speaks. Creation was His utterance. "I Am," He calls Himself in His divine content. And yet, "Hear, O Israel," He cries; "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Never a time in all the past eternity when that which supremely Is has not spoken and sent Himself abroad.

All this comes up to us when we hear St. Paul talking about his epistles. He is so absolutely healthy, so absolutely true, that the necessity of utterance is immediate and strong in him. As soon as he believes he speaks. He is incapable of the selfishness or the affectation which would shut his thought up in himself. So he tells it, with a human impulse; and to Corinth and Ephesus and Philippi and Rome his letters go abroad. The letter was not then what it is now. To write a letter then was a more serious thing than it has since become. Letters were then more rare and stately. But the impulse which sent them was the same. The thousand million letters which in a single year go flying through our post-offices,—what are they but the utterance of man's necessity of expression. It is in man's nature. Because it is in his nature it has embodied itself in his habits — the necessity of utterance.

Sometimes we wonder whether the cheap postage

and the hourly mails are good. We let ourselves imagine the enormous frivolity, the enormous sordidness, the enormous vice, which run in the channels of the post-offices through the land; and then we shudder and draw to ourselves pictures of a life of self-control and self-containment, developing its own thoughts and growing in the quiet richness of itself. But we know that we are wrong. Better too much utterance than too much repression. The thing you consciously refuse to tell lies like a burden on your life. Withheld knowledge is a dull, heavy weight. It lies in the doorway out of which it ought to pass, and hinders the natural exits and entrances. And so the cheap postage and the multitude of post-offices are good, in spite of the foolishness and viciousness to which they offer easy circulation.

Everything which is true and vital was in Christ and in the beginnings of His Gospel and this epistle. Impulse unmistakably is there. He wrote, indeed, no letters. There is no sign that what now occupies so large a part of the lives of many men, the putting of pen to paper, ever came into His life at all. But He was always seeking utterance. From the time He bursts from the home-life at Nazareth until He leaves His last message in the ears of His apostles on the Mount of Olives, He is always sending forth that Self of His which was not for Itself but for the world. "Go ye and teach all nations,"—so at the last He gave His own spirit, His own conception of what the work of life under the Gospel was, to His disciples.

How those disciples took it up we know full

well. They never for an instant had the idea that any truth they learned or any achievement which they made was for themselves alone. All the selfish luxury of spiritual life they never dreamed of. The spring poured out its streams immediately. The star was radiant on the instant that it caught the sun.

We cannot doubt, indeed, that in the lives of the apostles there were some deep, rich moments in which their souls dwelt in contented wonder and rapture on the love and greatness of their Lord. Between the hurried journeys, or when the crowd of suppliants for help had ceased for a few moments, or when the prison gates were shut at night, there must have come moments when they sat, as it were, hand in hand with Jesus, and dwelt in pure delight upon the friendship which was between their souls and His.

And yet, even then, the Christ whom they communed with was the whole world's Christ. The walls within which they sat and which grew bright with the assurance of His presence, grew also, with that brightness, transparent, and let them see the waiting humanity outside. And so, out of the chambers of their rapture came the rich letters which have been the treasure of the Christian world. It is not evident of even one of those letters that it looked beyond the occasion for which it first was written. St. Paul had his word to say to Rome or Corinth, and he sat in his cell or in his inn and wrote it with all its loving messages, with all its personal touches; and some traveller who happened to be going that way put it in his satchel; and by and by it was read

in some upper chamber where the little company of the disciples met. It was kept sacred. It was held close to the disciples' hearts. Every word in it was weighed and studied; and by and by when St. Paul was gone, and they could see his face no longer, it and the other Epistles which he had written to other churches were brought together and became his perpetual utterance to all the Christian ages,—a true part of the Bible, the world's Book. It was his uttered faith. In it he tells you and me to-day, as he told them, about his Saviour, his conversion, his faith, his heaven.

There is no evidence, I say, that St. Paul anticipated this. If he should come back here to-day, and go to that Book and turn its pages, and read his Epistles in this modern language of a world of whose existence he was ignorant, he might be surprised. "Here is what I wrote from my dungeon in Rome to the Ephesians," he would say; or, "I remember when I wrote from Athens, after I came back from Mars Hill, these words to my good friends at Thessalonica." They would come back to him as a man remembers what he has sent out from himself, and what so truly is himself that it never ceases to be his; and he recognizes it and claims it when he sees it again. "Paul's Epistles," he would see them called, and he would gladly own them; but they would almost seem to be claiming and borrowing the title from other utterances of his to which he had himself long ago given that name.

For here, in our text, St. Paul uses a word with which the world has been long familiar, but uses it

of something different from that to which it has been commonly applied. "Paul's Epistles," we say; and instantly we think of these well-known letters which are in the Bible. But they are not what St. Paul himself had in his mind, at least not in these words. His epistles, as he thinks of them, are men. "Ye are our epistles," he declares. It was not upon paper but upon souls, on characters and not upon waxen tablets, that he meant to inscribe the messages he had to give.

Let us see what this striking idea of St. Paul involves. In the first place it is certainly suggestive with regard to the nature of the message with which his Epistles were entrusted; for the character of a communication must always dictate and decree the nature of the medium through which it shall be communicated.

This law is universal, and its applications and developments are full of interest. In literature it is the source of all that we call "style." The common thought must clothe itself in plain and homely and familiar words. The grander and loftier conception creates for itself a worthy vesture and moves in the glory of some picturesque and stately phrase. Some things can be fitly told only in verse, others only in prose, and by and by you pass beyond what language has the power to express at all.

What is the meaning of music and of art? There is that which the instrument can tell which, after the instrument has ceased, you know has been said to you, of which you are sure that while you sat and listened it was becoming your possession, yet which

you are powerless to give an account of in any words that are any way adequate or fit.

Other messages come to you through the marble or the canvas, and others still through nature, which is God's Art—His great orchestral multitudinous unity of voices which speak, to ears attuned to listen, things which they alone can hear. And within the region of each special art there are adaptations. The drum and bugle may give out the wild and stirring summons to the battle. The stately organ and subtle violin or harp must lend their voices for the richer and more pathetic stories which the soul can hear. There is that which you must carve in ivory and that which you must hew in granite. Wax cannot bring the revelation which can shine forth from marble. The true artist is he in whom the feeling of the fitness of message and medium for one another is perfect. For the message is dumb without its true medium of expression, and the medium without its worthy message is insignificant and weak. Therein—in those two truths—lies the secret of the failure of all that tries to be art and is not, the secret of the success of all that is finally and truly art.

We can well see where such a principle will make its highest exhibition. The highest and finest element in the world's life is human nature. Therefore it will be through the medium of human natures that the loftiest and completest revelations will be given. That which could not be spoken in words, nor breathed through music, nor intimated in the subtle harmonies of nature, nor painted on canvas, nor cast in bronze, will be told, where only it can be

told, in man. A human life will be God's voice to utter His divinest truth. This is what made the Incarnation. "God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son": so speaks the opening verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The highest humanity must bring the highest message of Divinity.

When people talk, as they sometimes do, about not needing Christ, about the gospel of nature being enough for them, about the woods and the ocean and the stars bringing them all the truth their souls require,—here is their fallacy. The tidings which the stars and trees bring are good and inspiring. They soothe us in our tumult; sometimes, though not so often, they inspire us in our sluggishness; but, because of the essential limitations of their own nature, there are truths they cannot tell, there are inspirations which they cannot bring. Let me sit in the coolness of the woods and listen to all that the winds can say; and when they have said everything that they can, they leave the centre of my soul a-hungered. Then there must come some finer medium, able to transmit a finer music. Come, then, O Christ! with Thy humanity, able to tell of my dignity, my sin, my hope, my sonship; able to say to me as Thou hast said to such multitudes of Thy Father's children: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Here is the perpetual necessity of Jesus Christ, whom no nature-gospel can supersede or make unnecessary.

The Incarnation, then, is the supreme assertion

that only through the highest medium, which is humanity, can the highest messages be given to mankind. The same assertion is always being made in smaller ways. One of the most subtle of communications which ever demands to be made, is the essential nature of a period or of an institution. What was the spirit of the fifteenth century? What was the intrinsic quality of its life? How shall I know? I read its books, and my mind gets some sort of hard, cold picture. I gather up its events, and some sort of lifeless map unfolds before me. I watch its art, I listen to its music, I see its implements of living, and I catch something of the movement and aroma of its life. But if, out of its millions of graves, some one characteristic man should shake off the dust of death and come among us, all vital with the vitality of four hundred years ago, should we not have something which no page of Dante, no canvas of Raphael, no marble of Michael Angelo could tell? All the lost standards of life—the prejudices, the hopes, the fears, the sense of honor and disgrace, the aspirations, the fallacies, the good and bad, the virtues and the sins of the dead past—would live in him. Through him the heart of the departed century would speak yet to all the ages till the end of time—if he could live so long.

Perhaps that makes the argument too grand and distant. Think how to-day, and in the commonest life, messages are flying back and forth from life to life, keeping the whole of the world of men tremulous and quivering with endless communication. How did you know what courage was? Who told

you what it was to value truth, and how did the message come from him to you? Where did the sunrise get its freshness and the sunset its glory? Ask yourself, and you will see that it is through humanity; through what men have made of them and they have made of men; through the utterances by which humanity has given an expression of them that even the most external facts of the material world may be said to have attained their truest manifestation and to have gained by them their deepest influence. And all which comes from behind nature, all which comes from God—as everything does finally—must come through man if it would come at its best. For then it comes through like to like. No foreign element intrudes or intervenes. It is like welding gold to gold with gold, when God sends messages to man through man. For God and man belong together, and all else in the wide world is foreign to the unity they make.

And now, are we not ready to come to St. Paul's idea about his Corinthians? The principle, which I have taken so long to define and illustrate, never found a more perfect illustration than in him and them. "Ye are my Epistle," he declares. He had something to give the people of Corinth—what was it? His Christ,—the power of the living and dying and eternal life of his divine Master. He wanted to give that to Corinth—how should he do it? Should he write it in a book and send it there? I can imagine him writing and writing, and then, just about to send it, stopping and reading what he had written and saying to himself, "No! It is not there. I

have not put it, I cannot put it, in the page. It is too fine. It is too subtle. It is too divine." He realizes that he might go or send a man to write on every wall in Corinth in golden letters, "The Cross is powerful"; yet he has not written the Power of the Cross. That is unwritable in letters.

What then? He takes a Corinthian, a true man of Corinth; he unwraps all the unreality in which he is enveloped and gets at his heart; he takes off circumstance after circumstance till he comes to the real man; and then he writes the tidings which he has to tell on that. Right on that living, quivering humanity, right on that human heart all tremulous and sensitive with hopes and fears, he writes the story of the Cross. Into its horror and its exultation he inscribes the fearful glory of that tragedy which saved the world. And, when he has made it part of the man's very life, so that, living at his heart, it shines in his eyes and trembles in his voice and throbs out of him in every movement that he makes;—then Paul says to him, "Now go! You are my epistle."

And the man goes, with the writing of Paul throbbing, burning in him. He travels eagerly with his burning heart until he comes to the great city. He goes up and down in Corinth. He turns from the great streets into the little alleys. He stops at the doors of houses. He sits down in people's rooms. He does the business of a Corinth man. And everywhere, with every movement, there beats out from him this with which his heart is full and fiery—the Power of the Cross. He may say almost nothing;

but you cannot look at him without seeing in him the struggle to subdue himself and sacrifice himself for his brethren, for the love of Christ, the Crucified. Now, is not the work done, or at least begun? What the page or the painted wall could not tell, what no voice or trumpet could have uttered, behold! here it is written into a man so that other men, seeing it, must understand. "You are my epistle, known and read of all men!"

As such a picture grows clear before us, does it not impress us with the lofty privilege of the man to whom it was thus given not merely to carry but to be the Letter of the great Apostle? He was not simply to find his way to some official of the little church at Corinth, and deliver his missive and then go his way. He was the missive. Every deed he did was a new letter on the page. It was not something which men could rob him of, or that he could lose. He could lose it only when he lost himself. He could cease to be an epistle of St. Paul only when that heart on which, into which the truth of Paul was written, ceased to beat. And just then, even when it ceased to beat, it might with its last quiver utter its message more powerfully than ever, even under the torturing knife. As the English Queen bade her people know that when they opened her heart they would find there her lost fortress, so might St. Paul's "epistle" bid his tormentors understand that he would never be such an utterance of the truth as just when they were killing him for the truth's sake.

O my dear friends, have you any conception of a

life like that? Is there any great Gospel of which you are an epistle? If men cut deep into your heart, would any truth burst out from it like a fountain? If not, you do not know what it is to live. If not, there is something preposterous in your going about lamenting the monotony and uninterestingness of life. What do you know of life? Life does not begin with a man till he is filled with the truth which it is the necessity and joy of his existence to utter on every side. It is life indeed when that has come. Then, what you are proclaims the truth which you believe. Men catch the voice—the loud voice of your silent being—as you go along the street. Yours is the glorious privilege to make the truth seem more true, to make the lie seem more false, by the way you live. That is to be an epistle of God!

Again: the essential character of the religion of Christ is involved, I think, in these words of St. Paul and the truth which they express. The Christian faith is evidently something which must find its expression and utterance in men. It is a power whose manifestation must be in personal life. It is not something you can write out fully in a book. It is something which must be lived out in a life. Its Bible is, what? Not a system of doctrines, not a system of laws, but a clear glass through which is seen a Person. You must judge whether you have really appropriated the Religion of Christ and the Religion of the Bible by this test. What is it that you think of when you think of spreading your faith? Is it the promulgation of ideas, such as may be written

on paper and proved by argument? or is it the awakening of new spiritual life by the touch of the power which has entered into and become your self? The first is the notion of carrying an epistle. The second is the notion of being an epistle. The first has but reached the form of our divine faith; the second is dealing with its soul. Every word of Christ breathes with the spirit of the second.

Again: here is the real truth about the Christian Church. We are told that the Church came before the Bible. Of course it did. Not merely it came, but it must have come, before the Bible. It was not merely an historical event; it was a philosophical necessity. It must be so in every soul. We must remember what the Church really is: a group and a succession of living souls. Through them first the new religion must have gone abroad. You cannot picture Christ sitting down and sending abroad tracts which with cold written words should make the world discern in Him its Master. Rather we see how He must stand, as He does stand, there on the Mount of Olives, just ready Himself to re-ascend into the heavens, and fling out of His lifted hand live lives of living men into the air like birds, which flying east and west and north and south should carry Him abroad throughout the ages and the world. "You are my epistles," we can hear Him say. The Church was then and there immediately. It was there in that group of believers, eager to spread abroad the power of their faith. The Bible only came by and by, as an attempt to perpetuate the personal testimony of those believers

when they should be no more on earth, and to extend it into regions where their feet and faces could not go. Still and forever the Church is the great Christian power, and the epistles of the Lord are human hearts.

I do not plead that you should always be looking outward and thinking what is to be the effect of your life on other lives. The greatest power often comes by forgetting power, and doing the present task, and being the present character; often by the immediate sacrifice of power which other men are seeking. But the two do not really come into conflict with each other. To be our best for the great general good,—that is the union of the two; that is the true solution of their seeming discord.

All this seems to me to be necessarily involved in the metaphor to which our study of this morning has been given. St. Paul's epistles—the living men whom he filled with his truth—must have had two consciousnesses: one of his finger writing upon them, the other of the great world for which the message was written, to which it must be carried. The graving finger and the waiting world together enriched and solemnized their life. They were not two influences, but one.

We are all Christ's epistles, and we also must have two consciousnesses. Now, it is He, our Master, writing upon us; in at the very depth of our hearts we feel His graving finger. He presses His standards and His love into the very substance of our souls. He writes Himself on us. And then, when we are all possessed with the great richness of this experi-

ence, then, hark! a voice is in our ears. The world is calling to us: "O Soul, O Christian, that is not for you alone. It is for us as well. Come, O epistle of the Lord, and tell us what He has told you!"

There is no conflict, no struggle. We are what God has made us for the world of God. The hearts on which He has written His truth and love are too sacred for their own sole possession. Let who will come and read them. O brethren, may God make us such that it may be nothing but good for men to read us, what we are, down to the very depths!

VIII.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE HUMANITY.

"Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw a great company."—JOHN vi. 5.

THE sight of a crowd of human beings always is impressive. The crowd may be of any sort and gathered on any occasion. It may be a great, rapt multitude listening together to exalted and exalting music. It may be a mob, wild and tumultuous with passion. It may be an army marching like one great, marvellous machine, to meet the enemy. It may be the chance gathering of passengers whom some accidental obstruction has stopped upon the street. Whatever be its cause, it is a crowd; and it is interesting to any truly human soul that stands and watches it. It is not simply for the special thoughts which it suggests. It is not Xerxes weeping at the sight of the army of which in a few years no man will be left alive. It is not so definite as that. It is the general sense of human life, the very essence of this mysterious and mighty thing, apart from particular conditions, apart from curious speculations upon it. It is the fact of life laid on the heart of the living man that makes the interest of a great

crowd. A sensitive child will feel it. It is in some sense the personal impression broadened and deepened and richened; but there is also something in it which no contact with the individual produces,—a pure impression of humanity, as if you were able to extricate from all its entanglements the one essential, universal quality which makes a man a man; and, making it concrete and visible, yet preserving all the broadness of abstraction, to hold it before your eyes and let it impress itself upon your heart.

This is the general impressiveness of a crowd. But, no doubt, the impression cannot be uniform. It must vary with the character of the observer, of the human being upon whom the impression falls. In the words of my text, Christ is the Observer. He has crossed the sea of Tiberias with His disciples. He is sitting on a hillside of the Eastern country. He has been pondering, and perhaps praying. By and by He lifts up His eyes and sees a great company. The multitude whom He left beyond the lake has followed Him across, and He is face to face with them again. He cannot escape from men. Then He accepts them into His life and deals with them. And we can feel, I think, that as they impress themselves on Him we are getting, as it were, the largest and truest impression which humanity has ever made on man. That which I tried to say just now of the essential life making itself known, must have been more real with Jesus Christ than with any other watcher of his fellow-men that ever lived; for here was Man in His completeness receiving men in their completeness. More and more

we come to see that this was what the Incarnation meant. It was the Son of man, in whom the whole of all the life of man was gathered up, who sat and watched the multitude and first realized Himself in them, and then knew them in Himself as they had never been known before.

Let us think for a while about Christ looking upon a crowd of men. And first, let us try to see the picture which is in the words with which the scene is introduced to us. It is an old Bible phrase, one that recurs very often in the Bible story, in which the Saviour is described as "lifting up his eyes" to see the people. The picture is of a man sitting with his eyes bent down. He is in thought and contemplation. He is seeing with the inward sight. He is seeing the invisible. He is looking at truth. He is questioning Himself. So sitting, Jesus is the type of all introspection and meditation and study, of all that occupation of mankind which is turned away from active human life and is dwelling on the unseen things. We recognize at once the quiet, absorbed Figure on the hillside.

Do we not also recognize at once the quick response with which, in answer to the bustling feet of the approaching crowd, Christ turns and looks up, and listens and is ready for them, and gives Himself in answer to their claim. He is theirs. No self-indulgence, even in the deepest thought or highest vision, even in prayer to His Father, must make Him deaf or blind to human life appealing to Him and requiring His help. Therefore He lifts up His eyes.

Could the conditions and obligations of our human

life be more vividly set forth than here? There is no study or dream, no meditation or prayer, which must not hold itself subject to the demand of men. It is not simply that the dream or study is less important, and must sacrifice itself when the human need requires; it is more than that. It is that the study and the dream need for their rectification and fulfilment this readiness to report themselves to man and his nature. They must justify and know themselves before the face of human life looking to them out of its anxieties and hopes.

The illustrations of this are everywhere. Philosophers study and ponder to adjust their system of the universe to man. They cannot, they must not, be satisfied with their systems till they have lifted up their eyes and seen the "great company." Will their philosophy watch the world and explain it? they ask themselves. Can they tell man what his life is, and how to live it? The abstract student of political science must sooner or later see before him men waiting to be governed. The military theorists must tell how this especial battle is to be fought and won. The medical inquirer must know that there is sickness crying out to be cured. The theologians must be aware of eager souls appealing to them with the pathetic question, "What must I do to be saved?" The safety of man, the rescue of the thinker from the perils of his thought, the assurance that the farthest and deepest shall always be at the service of the immediate and pressing, lies in this readiness of all true men to lift up their eyes and see the "great company."

There are students and dreamers and theorists enough who are not ready. Sometimes their absorption and irresponsiveness makes other men rudely and crudely denounce all meditation and speculation, and say that the far-off heavens shine only for their own luxury, and have no light to give to the darkened earth. But such vexation is slight and temporary. The crowd looks to the scholar and the dreamer and the saint, and does not look in vain. It is a history full of instruction and encouragement that He who saw the deepest vision and prayed the holiest prayer was the very first to turn away from both, to lift up His eyes and see the multitude, and love them, and come down to break for them the bread of life.

But let us, before we come directly to the thought of how Christ looked upon the crowd, consider somewhat more fully what the sight of a host of his fellow-beings may be to any man who looks them in the face. May it not be summed up by saying that a crowd may be to any man a mirror into which he looks and sees what he is, and what he ought to be.

There is, first, the revelation of what a man is which comes to him in the presence of a crowd. I mean of what he is essentially, intrinsically, behind and separate from the countless accidents of his existence and the peculiar characteristics of his lot. This belongs with what we saw of the power which a great crowd has to present essential and absolute humanity to our minds. Facing that great presentation, many things which are not essential drop off and fall away. You go out from your individual

life, from your self-absorbed existence, and stand face to face with a great host of your fellow-men, and as you stand there (have you not felt it?) all that is really human in you throbs with vitality. It is alive with sympathy, while that which is not human manifests its weak vitality and begins to die. Your artificialnesses are exposed. You feel what shams your shams are, how selfish are your selfishnesses. Thus you see yourself in the mirror.

In the same mirror, in the face of the same crowd, you see also what you ought to be. For, along with the sense of how thoroughly your humanity is one with that of the crowd on which you look—not interfering with it, but increased and deepened by it, —there is the other sense of how distinct your life is from the lives of all these men. You are a separate being. There are some things which specialize in you the universal human life. The gifts and endowments which you possess become real to you; all the privileges of your life grow clear. You are entirely unable to be proud of them. They are yours for the sake of this multitude. They become the personal expression of the universal life, bound to restore themselves in service to those human necessities which look into your face with their appeal out of this one great face of the crowd.

I think that no man of true sensitiveness has come forth from his studies and contemplations into the storm and host of human living, without this becoming his revelation. He was himself for all of these. They claimed all that he was and had. If he was rich when they were poor, it was their riches that he

held. If he was wise when they were ignorant, it was their wisdom. Who was it that had made him to differ? Even the Father who had first made him one with them. And so humility and responsibility, which are so often in contention and stand apart from one another, meet in the heart of the true man who stands face to face with the crowd of his fellow-men.

It is these things, then, which all true men find, and which Jesus Christ, we cannot doubt, found in the presence of a multitude,— self-revelation and noble impulse—these two together. When He saw the gathering in the Temple at the time of the journey which He made there in His boyhood, when He looked upon the host who were waiting for their baptism at Jordan, when He came down from the mountain and found the crowd waiting in the plain, when He preached in the thronged synagogue at Capernaum, when He walked the streets of Jerusalem or stood in the courts of the great Temple,— everywhere these two things were taking place: He was knowing how truly He was one with man, and He was feeling that that in Him which was more than man was being claimed by the human need. The woods and mountains could not do these things for Him; therefore He turned from mountains and woods to the places where men were.

We cannot picture Christ to ourselves as a mere dreamer. The Oriental standard of the holy man— the mystic sitting in rapt, useless meditation year after year—wholly fails in Him. The nature-worshipper, listening to what the trees and streamlets

have to say, drinking in, after our modern notion of him, the unarticulated wisdom of the clouds and the flowers,—that is not the Jesus of the Gospels, the Jesus of the Christian faith. He is a man of men. Any day the murmur of a crowd will draw Him from the silence of the hillside. For the deep knowledge of Himself and the impulse of service pour into Him out of the eager faces and the pictures of suffering and joy which throng upon Him.

These are the elements out of which character is made. And so it is in presence of the world, in contact with the world, that character has birth. This was the truth which Goethe taught, the truth of a talent shaping itself in stillness, but a character in the activity of life. It is character, not talent, for the lack of which the world suffers. It is because of too little character, not because of too little talent, that the careers of human beings come to wreck. Therefore that which makes character must always be the true salvation of mankind. Therefore man, and not nature, is the true school of Human Life.

With this general truth concerning Christ's relation to the multitude of men clear in our mind, we are prepared to go on and speak of two or three of the special effects which it produced in Him. And the first which I ask you to observe is this: the perfect mingling of respect and pity in the way in which He felt about mankind. It would be useless to deny that pity, as we ordinarily know it, has in it almost always a mixture of contempt. It is not respectful to the nature of the man whom it pities.

That is the reason why it is resented almost as if it were insulting. "Do not pity me," the proud man cries. "Neglect me if you will; abuse me, but do not pity me." It is not simply that pity declares of necessity the misfortune of him on whom the pity is bestowed. That is inevitable. It is that pity, as we give it, seems to interpret and comment on misfortune. It seems to say that the man must be not worth much who could come to this. It seems to set the pitier over against the pitied in an assertion of superior desert.

Your friend has passed into some one of the great clouds of sorrow which darken the houses and the hearts of men. You, from outside the cloud, radiant with the sunshine of prosperity, speak in to him and tell him how you pity him. Do you not know the feeling of suspense with which you listen to hear how he will receive your words? Do you not know how hard it is, first to keep, and then to make him know that you keep, a true respect for him through all his suffering; and that there is no slightest latent spark of the consciousness of superiority in the commiseration which you offer him? The Book of Job, with the supercilious comfort of the prosperous friends, repeats itself in countless homes of sorrow.

It is the absolute absence of all this in Jesus Christ which makes the wonder of His life. There is never a touch of contempt in His dealing with distress. When He touches the blind man's eyes and gives him sight; when He steps across the threshold of the dead girl's chamber; when, by the Pool of Bethesda, He probes the intention and desire of the

sick man's soul; when He calls to the buried Lazarus at Bethany;—everywhere, do you not feel the infinite and exquisite reverence which is in His touch and His voice for the human nature to which His word is spoken, or on which His hand is laid?

It is not merely that Christ is a sufferer Himself. It is not merely that He is poor, and so is in special sympathy with poverty and distress. That would make Him the friend of a class, almost the partisan of a party among men—the party of the wretched and distressed. It is something larger and deeper than that. It is the reverence of the Lord of human nature for the human nature which He rules,—nay, of the Creator of man for the man whom He created. Who knows the wonder and mystery of the organ like the man who built it, who piled pipe on pipe, each with its capacity of various sound? And so, who is it that shall touch the jarred and untuned organ, and call it back to harmony, like him in whose soul the organ's primitive and ideal harmony forever dwells, and to whom all its discord and disorder is a sadness and a shame?

Therefore it is that Jesus Christ pities not merely the sorrow and the poverty which He knows by fellow-feeling, by being sorrowful and poor himself. He pities far more the sin and meanness and moral misery which He knows by its contrast with His own soul, and its departure from that purpose of human nature which lies always in the depths of His divine and human soul. He pities sorrow, but He pities sin far more. Pilate and Herod and Judas and the

Pharisees,—these are the truly pitiable creatures of the earth for Him. And yet, even for them the reverence is not lost in the pitifulness. The mystery and richness of their human nature still abides behind their cowardice and selfishness. Can you not feel it in the marvellous loftiness and courtesy of that conversation at the judgment seat? Does it not tremble even in the simple words with which, at the Last Supper, the Lord dismisses the traitor to his dreadful work?

The work of the Gospel on the soul which it saves, bears the conclusive witness of the respect which mingles with the pity which is the power of salvation. Where is the soul, rejoicing in the work which Christ has done for it, that has not wondered when it saw how the very visitation of Divinity which made its sin manifest, and bowed it down with penitence, also made manifest its preciousness, and opened visions of its possible attainment! You knew how you needed salvation when you met Christ. You knew how worth saving you were when you met Christ. The awe which a soul feels before itself as its spiritual capacity is being revealed in its conversion,—what is it but the reflection and echo of the reverence which is in the heart of Christ for the soul which He is saving by His grace?

What the soul feels the world feels. There is a certain insolence in most reformers. It hinders the triumphs of reform. It sullies the splendor of much of the noblest progress which the world has made. The leader stands before the host, and bids them to the battle almost with a taunt and a jeer. There is

nothing of that in Christ. There is a profound reverence for the army which He leads. Therefore the army has followed Him as it has followed no other captain. And when He leads it into its final victory, the victory will be sure.

Let me pass on to another impressive point in the way in which Christ looks at the crowd of men. It is something which we feel rather than see; but I do not think that we can be mistaken regarding it. It is the way in which the individual and the combined life do not hinder, but help each other, to His mind. To us the individual loses himself in the crowd, and we cannot find him. A new being—the multitude—takes his place. We cannot think that it was so with Jesus. We are sure that, to Him, each person in the crowd remained distinct, in spite of the host by whom He was surrounded.

Nay, more than that, are we not sure that the person was more distinct because of the host in whose midst his life was set? There was one token of this being so in one event of Christ's life. Do you remember where the poor Syrian woman crept up and laid a timid finger on His robes, and, when Christ recognized and owned it, His disciples almost rebuked Him with their surprise? "Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee; and sayest Thou, who touched me?" The blurring of the single face in the great sea of faces, the loss of the one in the many, the sacrifice of personality to society,—all this, with which we are familiar, we think of as wholly absent from the life of Jesus Christ. When the great company came pouring up the hill

upon the other side of Gennesaret, it was as a whole, making each part of which it was composed more vividly distinct, that Jesus saw the advancing multitude when He "lifted up His eyes."

We wrestle with the problem of socialism and individualism, the problem of the many and the one; and we wonder which of the two must be sacrificed to the other, which of the two shall ultimately overcome the other and remain the triumphant principle of human life. Let us be sure that to Christ, to God, there is no problem. Let us be sure, therefore, that in the end it shall not be by the victory of either over the other, but by the perfect harmonizing of the two, that the perfect condition of human life shall be attained. When society shall be complete, it shall perfectly develop the freedom of the individual. When the individual shall be perfect, he will make in his free and original life his appointed contribution to society.

Therefore—and here is what it is good for us to remember—it is not by elaborate plans for the building of the social structure; nor, on the other hand, by frantic assertions of personal independence; but by patiently and unselfishly being his own best self for the great good of all, that every man best helps the dawning of the Golden Age. Many a patient and unselfish worker is making valuable contribution to the great end who never dreams of what he is doing. Every man makes such a contribution who looks upon the crowded swarm of human life as Christ looked upon it; neither losing the man in the multitude, nor the multitude in the man; neither

letting the forest drown the trees, nor letting the trees dissipate and destroy the forest.

Sometimes, when for a moment we catch the view of Christ and share His vision, there comes great clearness into our spiritual experience, and that which has sometimes been the source of confusion and obscurity becomes the fountain of enlightenment and strength. Do you not know how, sometimes, it is because of the countless multitude of souls that the experience of each soul grows vague and unreal? In such a host does the great Captain know and care for every soldier? Does God feed and guard and educate me, individually, when all these millions are His children? Does the Holy Spirit bring His special gift to this one nature among all the innumerable natures which must have His grace? And at the last, shall this one little life, which goes trembling out of this familiar existence through the vast door of death, be surely kept sacred, and separate, and precious, and imperishable in the great world of life beyond? These are the haunting questions which beset our souls. Where are the answers to them, except in this which we believe to have been true of Jesus Christ, —that the more men there were, the more clearly did each man stand out distinct to Him who knew and loved them all. The crowd intensified and not obscured the individual.

Let that truth of the Incarnation be true in all the care of God for man, and does not our anxiety —what is sometimes almost our terror—pass away? Because I am one among millions of needy souls, the Holy Spirit shall the more surely find me with

my own peculiar food. Because no man can number the immortal, therefore my immortality is the more certain, and He who keeps all spirits will keep mine. With such assurance I look up and face the overwhelming multitude of life, and am not overwhelmed, but filled with buoyant faith and carried onward as on a flood of strength.

One other impression of the "great company" upon the mind of Jesus, I may allude to in a few words. He must have been filled, as He looked at them, with a sense of danger, and a sense of hope together. Danger and hope, so it would seem, belong together in this world where we are now living. Sometime a world may come where hope may be conceived entirely apart from danger; but now and here, when man looks far ahead and dares to anticipate great things, the certainty that great evil as well as great good may come starts up at once and will not be forgotten. It started up to Christ, and He never tried to forget it. No eyes ever saw more distinctly than His eyes saw the peril of human life. He read it in every human face. He had learned it in the temptation in the wilderness. Only, because He was God and knew the evil to be weaker than the good, He always kept the hope behind and within the danger. Because man had in him the power to be this dreadful thing, therefore he also had in him the power to be this splendid thing. I know that, if we had been in Jerusalem, and had met the blessed Saviour in the street, we should have read all this in His features: the fear and hope together, the hope intensified by the fear, but

always conquering it and making Him eager to call every human creature with the invitation of the divine Love, whose might He knew.

Shall we not see all that in His face as He looks at us? We have not begun to know our danger as He knows it. He is anxious for your soul as you never began to be. But He hopes for you as you never hoped for yourself. Let His hope take possession of you! Lift up your heart and know, as He knows, how perfectly you can be saved!

Thus, then, it is that Jesus Christ looks upon the crowded world: with reverence and pity; with the sight of the whole and also the recognition of the single life; with the sense of danger and the sense of hope. The result of it all, in Him, is that glorious consecration of His whole Being to the world, by which He is its Saviour. Let us see mankind as nobly as He does, and we shall be consecrated like Him; and in some true, deep, blessed way, we shall share His Saviourship,—perhaps by the sharing of His Cross, but we *shall* share His Saviourship. What more could man ask than that?

IX.

WORD AND DEED.

"For he spake, and it was done."—PSALM xxxiii. 9.

WHEN David sang these words in his great Psalm, he was calling upon the earth to fear the Lord, and all the inhabitants of the world to stand in awe of Him, because He was its Maker: "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast."

No truth can ever be opened to man's knowledge which can supersede the simple dignity of that conception, that God made the world. No motive for lofty life can be presented which can outshine this: that, because God made the world and all that therein is, the world must fear its Maker with that fear which is the beginning of wisdom. The method of men, trying to get at the true explanation of things which they see, is to construct an hypothesis, to see how that hypothesis will meet the facts which they observe, and to modify their hypothesis as the facts compel them. Behind all other hypotheses there must always stand the first hypothesis of a God-Creator. Before any revelation authenticates it, man, standing in the midst of the wondrous world, says to himself: "Where did it come from? What made it?" and the answer springs from his

own consciousness: "Why, the only creative power which I know of must have made it—a personal Will! Some He must have spoken the word, and it was done." With that hypothesis he tests the world, and nowhere does it fail him. Much light he gets upon the character and intentions of this sublime He who made the world; but, above it all, clearer and clearer it grows to the holder of that hypothesis continually that He did make it. And so he is ready by and by, when Revelation opens its mouth and Incarnation comes, to listen and look and understand the nature of the God whose existence has been to him the key of the world.

And so the primal motive of all life must be, as I said, this same Creatorship which is the final knowledge. What is the strongest power to make men good, to take them from their sins, to turn them to new lives? You say, Christ's Love. Yes, but the Love of Christ, remember always, is but the reassertion of Creatorship. It is the Father claiming His children, claiming them because they are His children; and all that which comes into the Christian's heart, and sets it struggling, yearning towards God, is only the reawakened childhood. It has been emphasized by danger; it is full of special gratitude for special love; but, after all, it is the soul of the child finding out the Father. It has its root in the creative act by which God made man when "He spake and it was done."

These thoughts cannot but arise when we speak of God's act of creation, but it is not on these thoughts that we will dwell now. I want to have

you notice with me the singular form of the declaration, and the way in which it puts what we may call the decisiveness of God. "He spake, and it was done," says David. Here, you see, is a perfect meeting of the Word and the Deed, and those two in their combination make the perfect life.

See what they are. The word is the completed thought. It is the reasonable process of a man who has come at last up to the point of resolution and of declaration. Not yet is there anything to show in outward life. No material has yet been touched. The world seems the same that it has seemed before; but inside the man everything is altered. The thought, the passion, the struggle of motive with motive has been going on, and at last has come to a decision. The word is ready, and is spoken. The conclusion is reached. The resolution is declared. That moment always has a special solemnity and interest when it is recognizable—the moment when the word is perfect, but the deed not yet begun. Such was the moment when Abraham determined on his journey, sleeping his last night in Ur of the Chaldees, with all the Jewish history before him; when Paul was sitting in the house at Damascus, with the determination of his new life made, but not one stroke of work yet done for Christ; when Columbus uttered his strong conviction to the world, waiting only for his ships to find America.

There are moments in all our lives which have this solemnity, as we look back upon them; moments when the word was complete, the resolution made, but the deed not yet begun. Before that moment

there had come the perplexity of puzzled thought; after it, came all the bewildering detail of action. But, just there, thought stood clear in its conclusion, and the coming deed glowed bright and certain in its promise; and that was, what such moments of a man's life always are, heroic and inspiring. It exalted us when we were in it, and we remember it with joy. But yet, on the completed word a deed must follow, or the word loses its beauty and distresses us. If, as we look back, we see our lives all strown with words that never came to deeds, with resolutions that never produced actions, we are as unsatisfactory to ourselves as if we saw our lives full of actions which had no reasonable resolutions out of which they sprang, but were the results of thoughtless whims. These make the two kinds of men who disappoint us always: the men of words, but not of deeds; the men of deeds, but not of words; the men who resolve without acting, and the men who act without resolving; for remember that speech has a deep meaning in the Bible. It is not the mere use of words. It is that whole reasonable process which culminates in the use of words, in the deliberate utterance. This is the high use in which the Lord Himself is called the Word of God.

These two kinds of men, then, there are. The men of words who are not men of deeds think, speculate, dream, grow vague, intangible, and helpless. The men of deeds who are not men of words grow shallow and shortsighted, practical only in the outside ways and little tricks of things. As men grow to be full and complete men, the two come

together. The word and the deed correspond. Every reasonable resolution has its action, and every action has its reasonable resolution. The object of all education, whether of the family or the school or the church, ought to be to bring this union to its best completeness.

Now, when David says of God, "He spake, and it was done," he is declaring that in God the word and deed unite completely. It is impossible for them to be separated. God cannot know a truth, involving a conviction, that shall not flash out some action, as its consequence, to the very ends of the universe. And God cannot do a deed out on the farthest confines of His eternal nature, but that deed has its root down in the very deepest depths of His nature. He never resolves but action follows. He never acts but resolution has gone before. In this truth lies the solidity, the solemnity, the wonderful beauty of the world. God does something to you. He opens His hand and fills your cup with plenteousness. Or is it the opposite? He closes His hand, and takes the joy and pride of your life away. Before He did that deed, He spake. It was the utterance of a reasonable resolution. It was no generous nor cruel whim. The strange event, be it all bright with sunshine or black with grief, comes in and sits down in your life crowned with God's intention. He did it, and He meant to do it.

And so, upon the other hand, no word without its deed. God's words are words of righteousness. "All sin is bad; all holiness is good." When once

those words have been spoken, evil must come upon wickedness; blessing must come upon goodness. No power in the universe can stop it. He who tries to be wicked, and yet enjoy, casts himself between a word and a deed of God, and must be crushed in their inevitable meeting. He who tries to be holy and yet thinks he must be wretched, is amazed to see how impossible that is. God takes him up and bears him, in spite of himself and his feeble expectations, into happiness. Ah yes; the necessary union, the necessary correspondence of word and deed, in God, is what makes the solidity and the solemnity, the awfulness and beauty, of the universe and of every life.

If we allow ourselves to ask why it is that God's words always produce deeds, why His resolutions always produce their actions, while ours so often only die away in their own echoes, and have no result to show; the answer, the deepest answer, I am sure, will be in this: that God's resolutions are real resolutions; or, to put it more simply, that God always thoroughly means everything that He says. It is not simply the greatness of His power, for there are regions where we, too, have power and yet in them our resolutions fail,—but the real difference is here: God's resolutions mean the things they say, while ours have only half made up their minds.

We dwell, indeed, on what we choose to call the delays of God. There is nothing more impressive to our thoughts. We know that God decrees the sinner's punishment or the saint's reward at the very moment of the sin or holiness; nay, in the very sin

or holiness itself the punishment or the reward is promised;—but years slip by, the man grows old, and only on the gray hairs, perhaps, comes the retribution of the action which was done in all the flush of youth. We watch and wonder at God's patience in His treatment of the nations. Jerusalem, Assyria, Rome,—the judgment of death which they have incurred comes creeping on for centuries before it fastens upon them and they die. So everywhere we see God's patience. But nowhere is there hesitation. However slow it comes, it comes with absolute sureness—the suffering upon the sin, the blessing on the goodness, the ruin on the wicked nation. And we must always remember that those words of our feebleness—"slow" and "quick"—mean nothing in the life of Him who is eternal.

But with us it is not merely delay. It is a lack of power in the word to turn itself into a deed at all. It is hesitation. How many times have you said, "I will give up this bad habit"? It is not that you have seen that it takes a long time to give it up. It is not that you began at once and it has taken you longer than you thought it would. It is that your word was not strong with real intention. You did not really mean what you said. Therefore the deed never came. How often we say: "I will go into the heavenly life. I will not live to myself; I will live to God and God's children." We speak and it is not done, because our speech was not strong and determined. Alas for our poor resolutions! Oh, the woeful, woeful lack in our lives of the decisiveness of God! It grows more and more clear to me—the

power that belongs to self-consecration and absolute determination. Men do what they mean to do. For the will is a part of God in man, and has some of His absoluteness and certainty.

It seems to me that no thoughtful man watches the state of things to-day, without seeing continual illustrations of a very curious and important truth with regard to this matter of the will and its power of decision. That truth is this: Decision is easy in the lowest and crudest conditions of human life; and it is easy again in the highest conditions of human life; but there are middle conditions in which decision becomes difficult, and men's minds float about loose and unsettled. Just consider if that be not so. You take a child, and how quickly he decides everything. Promptly and sharply his word leaps into action. He speaks and acts. There are very few considerations in his mind. Everything is simple to him, so simple that he can hardly conceive how it can seem otherwise to any one. Then take the other end—the full-grown man. He too decides. With many more elements to harmonize, with many more aspects of the subject to adjust than the child had, the mature man feels the necessity of decision, and grasps, as it were, the mass of many thoughts into his hand, and compacts them into a solid resolution. But between the two, what have we?—the irresolute and vague and doubtful years of him who is neither boy nor man, the years in which the directness of childhood has been lost, and the higher directness of manhood not attained, the years when crowding thoughts of many kinds make it seem

often impossible to decide on anything, the misty and uncertain years of young manhood and young womanhood.

The same thing is true about the degrees of culture, independent of age. The savage or the brute, whether he is old or young, decides easily, decides instantly. The beast sees his prey, and springs upon it. The savage sees his enemy, and the javelin flies. On the other hand, the man of highest culture, the finished soldier, the accomplished statesman, the experienced merchant, he again is quick as lightning. He speaks, and it is done. He summons with a quick, imperious call one summary result out of the complication of the business that lies before him. It is the man between the two, the man who has left the simpleness of the brute, and come in sight of many considerations which the savage never dreamed of, but has not yet passed out into the highest culture, who, Hamlet-like, hesitates and fears to act. There are faith and action at the bottom and faith and action at the top of life; between the two lies inability to decide.

It is a sign of where our age stands, of what multitudes of minds in it have left the lowest without having attained the highest culture, that so many men in our age are haunted by indecision. Light at the bottom of the mountain and light at the top; but half-way up clouds and mist! This is the order of the mental conditions of mankind. First comes he who leaps at conclusions without evidence; then he who questions everything; and then he who holds truth which he has proved. The dogmatist, the

skeptic, the believer, such is the order of the phases of the growing mind.

There is in the midst of all indecision and all doubt a constant conviction that not these, but decision and belief, are the highest condition for mankind. The highest men have come out of the mists, and are living in action and faith. And what delivers a man from the confusion and helplessness of the middle state is really a moral need. This is most interesting and important. When a man's intellectual life has become snarled and confused, and with all his thinking he cannot decide what he ought to do, then it is that a moral necessity steps in and furnishes the point about which all this mental disturbance crystallizes into coherency and purpose. A young man has so perplexed himself with many schemes of life that it seems impossible for him to settle upon any one thing and do it. But by and by his duty to his family, the need of making bread to put into his children's mouths, steps in, and he is compelled to fix his will on something, to strike the balance of his long debate and go to work. A man has tossed back and forth the arguments for two sorts of doctrine, all the while his heart no more holding any faith than the juggler holds the balls which he flings from hand to hand in quick succession. What finally stops his weary and unsatisfactory debating is the absolute necessity, for the regulation of his life, that he should have something to believe. It is the felt power of temptation, the absolute inability to meet sorrow with a debate instead of a faith.

Those are the things that must break up every man's indecision at last. If you are a young man questioning what you will do with your life, it must be the duty of being something for other men. Certainly it must be duty somewhere that saves you and brings you out a true man, and makes you really live a life. If you are an unbeliever, perplexed with many doubts, I tell you earnestly that the intellect will never clarify itself by its own action. It must be duty, duty demanding the power for its task which nothing but belief can give it; this it must be which throws light into the darkness, and scatters the mist, and makes you a believer. It is the man, "perplexed in mind, but pure in deed," of whom it is written that "At last he beat his music out."

I believe with all my heart in this necessity of the moral to the intellectual man. I believe it so strongly that if a man is not trying to do right, if he has not got the idea of duty, I count his judgments, upon even the most purely intellectual questions of religious faith, of very little worth. The selfish man who says that the divine self-sacrifice is incredible; the man who never grapples with temptation and so never feels the need of divine help, and yet who says that the miracles of Christ are impossible; the man who undertakes no tasks so spiritual that they demand eternity for their accomplishment, and yet who denies the everlasting life; the man who never cares for his own soul, and then says, "There is no God"—I find but little power in the skepticism of such men. It is the soul struggling to do right, and yet finding it hard to get hold of

truth—that soul which we do see here and there —which is terrible. In God Himself the moral and the intellectual are but one. His goodness and His wisdom perfectly belong together. And it is Duty that settles, with strong but gentle touch, the mingled problems of our life. The mother learns a faith above her child's cradle that she never knew before; and the man setting out to do some hard work for his land or his friend calls on a God of whom he has been debating with himself whether, indeed, there were a God at all.

I have been speaking about decision in general. I want to bring what I have been saying to a point and make it bear directly on the great decision of a man's life—that decision by which he becomes a Christian. There is one act which goes beyond and includes all other acts. It is the act in which, won by the authority and love of Jesus Christ, a man takes his whole self and gives it up into the mastery of the Lord, making himself thenceforth His disciple. That act of consecration and surrender, how differently it looks to different men; nay, how differently it looks to the same man at two different times! It is the very hardest or the very easiest act in all the world; so hard that it seems truly impossible, or so easy that it is amazing how any man can keep from doing it. The simplest natures often find it very easy. The child learns of its Saviour's love, and to accept that Saviour, to ask Him to forgive its sins, to make His will its law, seems to the child's heart the easiest and most natural of all things. The nature of the man in

penitence is the child's nature over again, and so for him, too, the trust in Him who is all-trustworthy seems not difficult. But, when the great act of dedication is not done at once, there come in all manner of complicating questions about Christ and His mercy, and they make irresoluteness, the condition of unresolve in which such hosts of men are standing.

Oh, how familiar those questions have grown! how dusty and forlorn they sound, as we bring them out of the thousand experiences in which they have lain and rankled so miserably! "Is Christ ready to receive me, and must I not do something before I come to Him? Is it indeed necessary that I should *own* my faith in Him? What will happen to me if I do not come? Do I believe enough to come? How is it with this other man? How is it with these heathen?" These are the questions that make men hesitate about the Christian act. They are always lying in wait. If the soul touched by the Saviour does not instantly and spontaneously give itself to Him, then they come flocking in. And when they have once taken possession of a heart, then, you know—so many of you there are who know—what comes, what hesitating, what unrest, what a constant sense that there is something which you ought to do, which yet you will not do, what putting off and putting off, what dissatisfaction everywhere year after year, till at last the time arrives when, through every hesitation, you step right across and do the act, and really give yourself, body and soul, to Christ. There is the only escape. There is the only daylight.

But when it comes, it is not like the first glad turning to the Saviour which might have been before all these sad years of questioning began. It is soberer and calmer. No longer possible for you is the happy taking of Christ's service as if there were no thought of anything beside; no longer possible for you is the fresh, enthusiastic faith of the young Christian all glowing with the joy of giving his whole life to Jesus; but still there is something very rich, if you will only take it,—the sober, deep, and soul-possessing joy of a man who has hesitated long, and asked many and many a question, now at last coming in the full strength of manhood, and resting his soul, heavy with its long-accumulated need, all in one great reasonable act, upon a mercy which has convinced him of its mercifulness by the way in which it has waited for him through all his hesitations.

And now, observe that when this decision comes, when the hesitation of the life gathers itself up at last, and with one total consecration gives itself to Christ, it is a moral act that does it. The intellectual elements are already there. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" says St. Paul. But this man has heard, year after year, of Christ. All of His work has been abundantly familiar. It has lain so long in the mind that it has caught the dust of floating difficulties that are not really a part of itself. What is needed is not more knowledge; it is something that shall transfer the knowledge into action. It is Decision.

And that, surely, is moral. It grows from moral

needs. It acts by moral powers. Indeed, it corresponds exactly to the act which one of those people who were with Jesus in Palestine did when he became the Lord's disciple. He had known all about Jesus before. He had heard of Him. He had heard Him. He had discussed His claims. He had looked up the Scriptures, to see how this Teacher corresponded with the old Teachers. He had watched other men who had come to Christ, as interesting phenomena. Could you have a truer picture of the position in which many a man here and now stands concerning the Saviour? But some day there came a great need into that Jew's household. Into the peace and composure dropped a hot and burning pain. Perhaps sickness smote him who had never known what it was to feel an ache before. Perhaps death came and stood at the door and beckoned; and some one, the dearest in the household, grew pale as if he knew the summons was for him, and began to gather up his reluctant robes, to follow the austere messenger. Perhaps something deeper than either of these things came. Perhaps the man's soul itself grew troubled. A deep dissatisfaction settled on it. Its selfishness, its worldliness, dismayed it. It cried out at its own uselessness. It was sorry for its sin.

In either case, what followed? How all that had been learned before of the Saviour sprang into clearness, grew compact with force! The *need* took everything the man had thought before, and crowned it with decision. He who had reasoned and reasoned, talked and talked before, now "spake,

and it was done." Do you not hear the rushing of the centurion's horses across the hills to Capernaum, to bring Jesus Christ where his servant is lying sick? Do you not see the figure of the poor woman creeping into the banquet-room in her shame and love? Do you not hear the timid knock in the darkness of Nicodemus at the Master's humble doorway? In every case the relation between the intellectual conviction and the moral act is plain. The thought and reasoning and observation have gathered the material for decision and piled it in the life, and then the spark of a need falls into the tinder and the decision blazes in an instant.

People talk about "sudden conversions." "Do you believe in them?" says one. "You do not believe in them, do you?" says another. My friends, there never was a sudden conversion, and there never was a conversion that was not sudden. Never was there one that had not been made ready beforehand, never one which, having been made ready beforehand, did not come by one strong resolution, one supreme decisive, "I will." There is a sudden conversion of which men talk which is no conversion. No change of life, no change of heart, nothing but just a mood, the momentary impression of the sensibilities by the sweet sound of a name, or the imperious declamation of a speaker, or the plaintive singing of a hymn. The trouble with that is, not that it is sudden, but that it is not conversion. But the true conversion is always sudden, and never sudden.

Look at the thief upon the cross beside the dying

Jesus. If ever any man seemed to be suddenly converted, it was he. But who can tell how much, before his crucifixion, in all the wild days of his wickedness, he had known of Him who was to be the sharer of his suffering? Or, if we allow ourselves no such conjecture as that, still we must remember that he saw upon the cross beside him the nature of Jesus Christ in its supremest manifestation. The last veil was drawn aside, and the very heart of the Divine Sufferer was laid bare. And the thief, too, saw with perceptions quickened by his own agony, and by the terrible intensity of his need. No wonder if his suffering eyes saw into the Saviour's suffering love with most exceptional clearness and quickness. No wonder if he gathered a knowledge of Christ in that hour while they hung together, which less intense perceptions would have taken a long time to gather. It was the experience of years compressed into the agony of an awful hour. And so when at the last, he broke down and gave way, and cried out from his cross, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" it was as truly the completion of a process as when, through years of study and reflection, some placid soul accumulates those thoughts of Christ and His salvation which some shock of overwhelming need finally crystallizes into the strong resolution to come to Christ. There comes a moment when the resistance gives way before the weight, whether that weight be the force of the cannon ball that comes crashing through the wall, or the pressure of the snow that has gathered flake by flake upon the roof.

Indeed everything in this world is sudden and not sudden. The sunrise that has been creeping up the east for hours, and then leaps in a moment from the eastern hills; the onset of an army which has slowly gathered its strength together out of cottages and cities, and then falls like an eagle on the enemy; the breaking up of a kingdom which has been growing rotten at the heart, and in some still noontide of history drops into ruin; the coming of a boy to manhood; the bursting of a plant to flower;— all things are sudden and not sudden.

And so must be the coming of man to Christ. "Coming to Christ!"—I love those words. I believe there are no words that have meant so much to human ears as those words have meant. To come to Christ is the completest act that any man can do. It is the acceptance of His forgiveness, the reliance upon His help, and the gradual growth into His character. Is not that plain? Is there anything mysterious or unintelligible about it? There is one Being, and only one Being, who can forgive you for your sins, and that is the God whom Christ manifests. There is only one Being who can make you live a new life, and that is the present, ever-living Christ, to whom you can pray, whose soul your soul can touch. There is one Image, growing into which you shall be perfect. It is the Image of Christ. Now, when you ask Him to forgive you, when you ask Him to help you, and, by any culture that He will, to make you like Himself,—that is coming to Christ. When you have done that, you have come to Christ. It begins when you lay hold

upon the borders of His help. It is finished only when you have attained His Christliness. When you have made up your mind to do that, you have resolved to come to Christ.

Whether it be sudden or gradual, evidently that makes no difference. That is a question of curiosity. But whether you do it or not,—on that hangs everything. There are men who have been gathering material for that resolution for years. Now the spark must touch the tinder. Now the resolution must be made. Now, having seen Christ so long, you must give yourself to Christ.

One last barrier, perhaps, stands between you and the Christian Life. It may be fear! If it is, lay hold of Christ's promises. You cannot fear God if you really know what He is. Does the child fear the mother's bosom? Does the bird fear its home nest? Or, it may be pride! If it is, rise to a higher pride. Grow indifferent to all that men will say about you if you become a Christian, by hearing, above everything that they say, the songs of the angels, among whom, Christ says, there is joy over every sinner that repenteth. Let to-day be the strong day of your life, the day when you "spake, and it was done"; the day when you gave yourself to the living, loving Christ, and He took you into His Life and Love.

X.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

"And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."—GENESIS iii. 24.

THE recent discussions about, and criticisms of, the first chapters of the Book of Genesis have left a certain vague and uncomfortable feeling in the minds of many men. Not a few people, probably, think in a dim sort of way that geology, or something else, has made those chapters of very doubtful worth. The worst part of this feeling is that it robs the early story of our race of the spiritual power that it possesses. Apart from the question of its historic character, the account of man's origin which is given in Genesis is profoundly true to man's spiritual experience, and its imagery is representative of perpetual and universal truth. Among its images one of the most prominent and striking is this one of the "Tree of Life." Let us try, with the beautiful words of the Genesis-story fresh in our minds, to see if we can get at the meaning of it, and understand what is meant by the history of the tree of life which runs through all the Bible.

Let us briefly recall the story. In the garden

where God first placed man, the scene of his earliest experiences, it is said that God, his Creator, planted two trees. There were many others, but these two were noticeable and distinct. One of them was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the other was the Tree of Life. There they stood side by side, both beautiful, both tempting. But on one of them—the most tempting—a prohibition is laid. Of the tree of knowledge man must not taste. But man rebels, wilfully, independently, against God's word, and does eat of the tree. The consequence is that he is not allowed to eat of the other tree. He is driven out of the garden where it stands, and is forbidden to return; and his return is made impossible by "cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Thus begins the long career of humanity. Man is forced to undertake the work and drudgery of living. The centuries, laden with wars and pains and hopes and fears and disappointments and successes, start on their slow procession. But no more is heard of the tree of life. It is not mentioned again in the course of the Bible. It is left behind the closed gate and the flaming sword, until we are surprised, at the extreme other end of the Bible, the New Testament, to see it suddenly reappear. In the book of St. John's Revelation, where the promises of the world's final glory are gathered, this promise stands among the brightest: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." The long-

lost tree is not lost after all. God has only been keeping it out of sight; and at last He brings man to it and tells him to eat his fill. "In the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Into this glory the angels of God are to bring His people at the last.

This is the story. And now, what does it mean? Certainly nobody can read it and not be sure that the element of allegory is very large in it. Whatever literal events may correspond to it at the beginning or at the end of the human history, certainly that losing and finding again of the tree of life may be taken to represent the course of man's career in spiritual things, the way in which the race and the individual are trained and punished and rewarded. That interpretation, at least, is open to us, because that meaning of the story finds its commentary in our own experience, and in all the history of mankind. If we can understand that meaning, we have reached some idea of the purpose for which the revelation of the Book of Genesis was given.

And that meaning is not hard to find. The tree of life evidently signifies the fulness of human existence,—that complete exercise of every power, that roundness and perfectness of being which was in God's mind when He made man in His own image. It represents not mere endurance, not merely an existence which is going to last forever. It represents quality more than quantity, or quantity only

as it is the result of quality. To eat of the tree of life is to enter into and occupy the fulness of human existence, to enjoy and exercise a life absolute and perfect, to live in the full completeness of our powers. We can feel, I think, how this luxuriousness and fulness is naturally embodied under the figure of a tree. In many myths of many races, the tree has seemed the fittest symbol of the life of man; and the tree perfect in God's garden is the truest picture of man's whole nature complete under His care.

On the other hand, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents that mottled and mingled experience of life by which men's lives are formed, their understandings opened, their characters decided. To eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—what is it but to go through just what you and I have gone through ever since we were children? It is to deal with life; to come, by contact with the world, to judgments of what is good and what is bad; to form habits of thinking and ways of feeling about men and women and about their actions. In one word, to have had experience is to have eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The little, irresponsible child has never tasted it. It is its savor in the grown man's mouth which gives his face its soberness, and oftentimes its bitterness.

What, then, is the truth about these trees? He who wilfully and rebelliously, in his own way and not in God's way, eats of the tree of knowledge, he shall be shut out from the tree of life. He who wantonly, selfishly, and by the dictates of his own

appetites, uses his powers and wins his experience, shall not come to the fulness of those powers, nor get the best out of life. He who insists on knowing things or doing things away from God, shall not rise to the completest capacity of skill or strength or knowledge. Wilfulness, selfishness, independence, self-confidence, shut man out from the perfection of his life.

And one point more. Adam and Eve being thus driven out from the tree of life, who were the guards that stood to hinder their return? Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way. And the cherub in Scripture is a being with a certain symbolic character. He is ordinarily represented as a composite creature-form, as a winged man or a human-headed beast—a way to represent that combination of intelligence and force which was also expressed in the Egyptian sphynx and in the winged bulls and lions of Assyria. The essential idea of the cherubims seems to have been that they represented the forces of nature as the servants of God. "The Lord sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet," says David, and in another psalm, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly." These forces of nature, these things of the world about us, these objects and circumstances, made by God to assist in the pleasure and culture of mankind,—these same things they are which, when man is rebellious and selfish, stand between him and his fullest life. Those objects and circumstances which, if a man were docile and humble and lived his life with and under God, would all be developing and

perfecting him, making him stronger, making him happier,—all those things, just as soon as a man cuts himself off from God and insists on getting knowledge and doing work by himself, become his enemies. They hinder him instead of helping him; they are always pulling him down instead of lifting him up; making him a worse and smaller instead of a better and larger man.

Now, follow on with the parable. Man has been driven out, and the cherubims are keeping guard. The tree of life disappears from man's sight, but it is not lost. Man is driven out of the garden where it stands, but immediately the education begins which, if he will submit to it, is to bring him back at last to the Paradise of God where the tree of life will be restored to him. And all the training that comes in between is of one sort. Everything from Genesis to Revelation has one purpose,—to teach men the hopelessness, the folly, the unsatisfactoriness, of a merely wilful and selfish life; to bring men by every discipline of sorrow or joy to see the nobleness and fruitfulness of obedience and consecration. When that is learned, then the lost tree reappears. Hidden through all the lingering centuries, there it is, when man is ready for it, blooming in the Paradise of God.

Is not the meaning of that symbol plain? Is not the truth it teaches worthy of a revelation? The highest, fullest life of man has ceased to be actual upon the earth. You cannot find one man who is living it, not one who, in some part of his nature or his conduct, is not pinched and meagre, missing the

completeness for which he was made. But the possibility of that highest life never has been lost. It is waiting till man is able to reclaim it. And man shall reclaim it just as soon as he is completely in harmony with and obedient to God.

One other point comes in,—not very clearly, but with a suggestion that completes the picture. Again and again in Scripture we read of the angels as God's agents in the restoration of His people to their long-lost glory. "The reapers are the angels," in the mighty harvest. The beggar Lazarus, after all his waiting and wretchedness was over, was "carried by the angels into Abraham's Bosom." And the angels are said to watch with joy as each new repentant sinner claims forgiveness and, being forgiven, returns into harmony with God and into his possibility of perfectness. It is not clearly said, but if, among these rescuing and helping angels, there are found the cherubims who were set to guard the gate of the first Paradise against the unhappy man's return,—then, the whole story is complete. It is by those same forces of nature which are now his hindrances that man is finally to overcome. Not by a new dispensation, not by a new world of things, but by these same things, these very same old things which have so long stood between him and his highest, he is finally to reach his highest. The cherubims who so long shut him out from, are at last to bring him back to, the tree of life.

This is the story of the world then, and the story of man as the Bible tells it—the story of the lost and refound tree of life. There is something broad

and primal in that universal figure of the tree. It is interesting, I think, to turn to the New Testament and see how, when Jesus Christ came, the story which He had to tell of man's condition and prospects was just the same with this old story of the tree of Genesis. Take the parable of the prodigal son—how different it is! how quiet and domestic and familiar! how homely in its quaint details! But if you look at it, you will see that the meaning is the same. There, too, there is a first native possibility, the place in the father's house to which the boy was born. There, too, that possibility ceases to be actual because of the wilfulness of him to whom it was offered. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me"; it is exactly Adam and Eve over again. There, too, the possibility is not destroyed, but stands waiting, out of sight of the wanderer, but always expecting his return; the father's house from which the son goes out, and which stands with its door open when long afterwards he comes struggling back. There, too, the instant that submission is complete,—"I will arise and go to my father,"—the lost possibility is found again, for, "While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." The story of the tree of life and the story of the prodigal son are the same story. Drawn with such different touch, colored in such different hues, they set before us still the same picture of the life of man.

It might be well to look at that picture as it represents the world's life, and as it represents the life of

the individual. I shall only undertake to do the latter. Of the other let me merely remind you in a few words how true a conception, how complete an explanation, of the state of things which we see everywhere around us is this great Bible conception of the hidden tree of life. It is not lost, not totally destroyed forever, not taken out of man's hope—that better possibility of man, that full condition of humanity, in which every act has its most perfect motive, and every motive its most perfect act. It is not lost, but it is hidden; hidden where the powers of the world will not let men get at it, but where men feel that it exists, live otherwise than they would live if they knew that it had perished, and never give over the hope of reaching it some day again.

Could any picture more completely describe this mixed state of the world we live in? The alternations of hope and despair, the way that generosity and meanness by turns take possession of the world, the wars and tumults, the eagerness for progress and the dreary clinging to old sins, the history of the world for any one week, the passions that agitate the breast of any ruler, the motives and feelings that contend in a political convention,—where is there any theory of man that takes them all in more perfectly than this Bible theory of the tree of life; lost but not destroyed, blooming somewhere still behind the cherubims, never quite forgotten, and to be made visible again when man shall have become able, by long education, to enter in and take of its fruit and eat?

But let us leave this larger view, and turn to see how, in the life of each of us, the story of the tree of life finds its fulfilment. Every man has his tree of life,—the full completeness of life for him, the best that those powers which he has, that special combination of qualities that he is, is capable of being. It gives a dignity to every human being to think this of each. It breaks the herd and sets the individual before you. Walk down the crowded street some day, and think of it. They all look so alike, these men and women, such hosts of them, with the same narrow, vulgar, greedy faces! They sweep by you as little distinguished as the drops in the stream that goes hurrying and whirling past your feet.

But think of them again. Every man and woman of them has a tree of life—a separate completeness of character, a possibility which, if he could fulfil it, would stand a distinct and perfect thing in the universe, the repetition of no other that ever went before, and never to be repeated by any that shall come after. Take out the meanest and most sordid face that passes you, the face most brutalized by vice, most pinched and strained by business;—that man has his tree of life, his own separate possibility of being, luxuriant and vital, fresh, free, original. "How terribly he has missed of it," you say. Indeed he has. A poor, undistinguishable thing he is, as wretched as poor Adam when he had been driven from his tree of life, and stood naked and shivering outside the Garden, with the beasts that used to be his subjects snarling at him, and the ground beginning to mock him with its thorns and thistles. That

poor man evidently has been cast out of his garden, and has lost his tree of life. And is it not evident enough how he lost it? Must it not have been that he was wilful? Must it not have been that, at the very beginning, he had no idea but for himself, no notion of living in obedience to God? Do not say that that is a false and artificial explanation, a mere ministers' sermon explanation of how this insignificant creature on the street lost all his chance of a strong, vital life. Tell me, nay, ask yourself, if he had realized God, if he had known and been glad to know from the beginning that his life belonged to God, if he had really tried to serve God, could he have come to this? If consecration could have saved him, is it not the absence of consecration that has ruined him?

And he is only a single emphasized and recognizable example. All the failures of men are of the same sort. What makes the scholar's life a failure? What makes him sigh when at last the books grow dim before his eyes, and the treacherous memory begins to break and lose the treasures it has held? He has been studying for himself, wilfully, not humbly, taking the fruit from the tree of knowledge. What makes the workman turn into a machine? What makes us feel so often, the more his special skill develops, that he is growing less and not more a man? What shuts the merchant up to his drudgery, making it absolutely ridiculous and blasphemous to say of him, as we watch the way he lives and the things he does from the time he rises till the time he goes to bed, "That is what God made that man

for "? What makes every one of us sigh when we think what we might have been? Why is every one of us missing his highest? Why are we all shut out from our trees of life? There is one word, one universal word, that tells the sad story for us all. It is selfishness—selfishness from the beginning. If we had not been selfish, if we had lived for God from the beginning, if we had been consecrated, we know it would have been different; we should have had our Eden inside and not outside; we should have eaten in God's due time of our tree of life, and have come to what He made us for,—our fullest and our best life.

And then add to this sense of exclusion, this consciousness of having missed our best, the other symbol of the cherubims. What is it that keeps us from our tree of life to-day? What is it that, when we have once lost it, keeps us shut out from the dream and pattern of our existence? Behold, it is those very forces, those same circumstances which ought to and which might have taken our hands and been our guides, to lead us to our highest possibilities. If you are a student who scoffs and is irreverent, what has made you so? That very study, that very science, which might have led you to a profound and thoughtful and tender awe of God. Or you are a working man or a working woman, and your work has made you bitter and discontented, that very work which was sent to make you happy and healthy. Or you have lived a life of society and you have grown frivolous and selfish by that contact with your fellow-men which might have made you

earnest and self-forgetful. Or you have been rich, and your riches have made you proud instead of humble. These are the powers which ought to make us good, and do so often make us bad; whose mission is to bring men's souls to God and to their own best attainment, but which our obstinacy so often compels to stand between us and God, and shut us out from Him. These are the cherubims with flaming swords that keep us from our tree of life.

I cannot set before you as I wish I could that universal tragedy of human existence,—the consciousness of every man living that he has not found his best. I can only rely on what I know is in the heart of every one of you giving confirmation to my words. The lost tree of life! we were driven out from it before we tasted it, and we have lived in exile from it all our days, the most successful and the most unfortunate of us alike. How little is the difference of our success or our misfortune, after all! we have all together failed of the best that we were made for, failed of the fulness of our life.

So true is the beginning of the Bible to our continual life! so in our own experience we find the everlasting warrant of that much-disputed tale of Genesis! But, thank God! the end of the Bible is just as true. As true as this universal fact of all men's failure is the other fact, that no man's failure is final or necessarily fatal; that every man's lost tree of life is kept by God, and that he may find it again in God's Paradise if he comes there in humble consecration.

Let us put figures and allegories aside for a mo-

ment. The truth of Christianity is this: that however a man has failed by his selfishness of the fulness of life for which God made him, the moment that, led by the love of Christ, he casts his selfishness aside and consecrates himself to God, that lost possibility reappears; he begins to realize and attempt again in hope the highest idea of his life; the faded colors brighten; the crowding walls open and disappear. This is the deepest, noblest Christian consciousness. Very far off, very dimly seen as yet, hoped-for not by any struggle of its own but by the gift of the Mercy and Power to which it is now given, the soul that is in God believes in its own perfectibility, and dares to set itself perfection as the mark of life, short of which it cannot rest satisfied.

And when this change has come, when a soul has dared again to realize and desire the life for which God made it, then also comes the other change. The hindrances change back again to their true purpose and are once more the helpers. That, too, is a most noble part of the Christian's experience, and one which every Christian recognizes. You prayed to God when you became His servant that He would take your enemies away, that He would free you from those circumstances which had hindered you from living a good life. But He did something better than what you prayed for. As you looked at your old enemies they did not disappear, but their old faces altered. You saw them still, but you saw them now changed into His servants. The business that had made you worldly stretched out new hands, all heavy with the gifts of

charity. The nature which had stood like a wall between you and the truth of a Personal Creator, opened now a hundred voices all declaring Him. The men who had tempted you to pride and passion, all came with their opportunities of humility and patience. Everything was altered when you were altered. The cherubims had left their hostile guard above the gate, and now stood inviting you to let them lead you to the tree of life. This is the Fall supplanted by the Redemption. This completes the whole Bible of a human life.

This, then, is the truth of the tree of life, its loss and its recovery. We turn to the only human life in which it was never lost, the life of Jesus Christ. We own in Him the perfection of humanity—every human power at its best used for its best. With Him there was none of this brooding dissatisfaction that there is with us. Many a time His hard and heavy work weighed on Him, and once He cried to be released; but never is there any word of bitter regret as He looks back, never in all the Gospel one self-reproach that He had fallen short of completeness either in character or work. Oh, below all the pain, what a satisfaction there must have been in that tried and tortured heart! Who would not feel that any pain were easy if one could be as free as Jesus Christ was from self-reproach, if one could say as He said, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do," and at last, with one more "It is finished," lay a life that had completely succeeded back into the Father's hand?

Yes, Christ always lived to His fullest, and as we read His story we know why. The secret is not hard to find. It is in that one clear power of consecration that runs through all His life. It is because He is living to God from the beginning to the end that He lives so completely. And where His obedience is most manifest, the completeness of His life is most manifest, too. We see that in the Cross. He was never so alive as when He was dying there. There, where He reached the consummate obedience, He reached the consummation of life, too. The Being most alive, the Being whose life is running out into most vast and stupendous consequences, is He who hangs expiring there. The Cross is His Tree of Life.

And so with us, my friends. If we do really give ourselves to God, whatever cross that consecration brings us to will be our tree of life. It may seem as if, in making ourselves His, we strip our lives of their richness; we give up friends, we give up amusements, we give up easy days, we give up our own will to be the Lord's. It looks like death. It looks like emptying the precious wine of life away, and breaking the precious vase that held it. But as you go on in your sacrifice, behold! the memory of Eden is revived, and the prophecy of Paradise is fulfilled. The cross on which you stretch yourself sends its strength and abundance into you; and it is not dying, but living. No matter what men call it, you know that it is living. Your cross is your tree of life.

And yet again, the Cross of Christ may be not

merely His Tree of Life, but ours. If it imparts its power to us; if, loving Him because He died upon it, we grow eager to give ourselves to Him and to our brethren; then that old wood on which they crucified Him becomes the source and fountain of our life. It is not merely that He never was more alive than when He hung there, but our life also is revived when we come nearest to it. The power of our self-sacrifices is in that self-sacrifice of His. Our crosses are cut out of that one inexhaustible Cross of Calvary.

Behold, then, for every man there are not two, there are three trees of life—the tree in Eden, the tree on Calvary, and the tree in the Paradise of God. For every man there is God's first design, and there is God's final salvation; but between the two there is Christ's Redemption. We lose our life; we find it in our Saviour; we keep it unto Life eternal.

Where do we all stand? Behind us is the loss; we have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Have we recovered our life at the Cross? If we have, then, by obedience springing out of gratitude, the way is open for us into the eternal life of God. "Blessed are they that do his commandments," that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the gates into the city.

XI.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-FORGETFULNESS.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."—MATTHEW x. 39.

THERE are some words of Jesus Christ that seem to mean one special thing; and when we have found that meaning in them we seem to have grasped them entirely. There are others which are so large that we are sure they must mean many things; and any one meaning of them that we find is only one of many, one of the multitude of points at which such great words must touch human life. I think this word of Christ must mean much beside the truth that I shall try to draw out from it. I am sure it does. To "find one's life," To "lose one's life,"—"life" has so many stages or layers of meaning, as it were, that those expressions may well refer to many different experiences corresponding to the kind or depth of the life which is described as being found or lost. On its very surface it reveals itself as a law of physical health, and it has in it the soundest principle for the treatment of the life of the body. In its profoundest sense, it is the standard of the everlasting judgment of souls. They are words that may

stand written at the head of every page in the awful book which is to be opened for the settlement of the eternal destiny of every one of us, as we gather before the throne of Christ the Judge. You will understand, then, that I do not try to exhaust the meaning of a text so inexhaustible. I only want to tell you of one meaning of it which, I am sure, if we can take it in, will not fail to commend itself to our own experiences and needs.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The words might suggest several figures, but perhaps all this talk about finding and losing most naturally suggests the thought of that whose finding and whose loss is, in our mercenary world, the subject of our most continual anxiety. It make us think of money. Life is treated like money. And certain things are true of money, which all who have anything to do with it understand. Its value is not in itself. It gets its value from the things it can accomplish. What it will buy is what makes it so precious. The moment you separate money from the power of purchase that belongs to it, that moment all its worth is gone. The most entirely worthless thing that Robinson Crusoe saved out of the wreck, and carried on shore, was the bag of gold. It could not buy anything, could not be traded away, and so it was good for nothing. And so if any man wilfully separates money from its uses, he really destroys its value, no matter how much he may seem to be setting a special value on it. The miser who shuts his money up, and will not spend it, thereby makes it a worthless

thing. There is nothing so valueless in all his dingy hovel as his chest of gold. The rags in which he clothes himself, the candle-end that he lights to make the darkness visible, are worth more than all his heavy chest contains. His attempt to value money for itself has made his money valueless.

Now, the text suggests that just the same things are true of human life. Life is a means for certain purposes. Freely given to secure those purposes, it is inestimable. The instinctive delight of men as they watch a life freely given for a noble end—a "well-spent life" as they love to call it—bears witness how inestimable it is. But a life withheld from its purposes loses its value. It is like the miser's gold, made worthless, and so lost, by the very care that is taken not to lose it. Of both money and life, can we not see how it is true that he who saves them loses them? but he who loses them for a worthy purpose gets their worth—"finds" them in the real possession of their value.

There is no difference between men that is more striking. One man is always thinking about his life, how pleasant and how beautiful it is. He is always trying to make it more pleasant. He is always comparing his days with one another to see which was the pleasantest. He is like the miser whose joy is to dip his arms into the yellow gold, and feel it ripple over his delighted hands; who delights in counting over and over the treasures the amount of which he knows by heart. Another man never impresses you as thinking much about life in itself. He never seems to be pondering whether life is

pleasant or unpleasant,—nay, scarcely whether life be good or bad, so earnestly, so eagerly his soul is set on something that he has to do in life, something that must be done before death comes to stop him. He is like the merchant who scarcely looks at the coin or bill he gives away, so intent is he on what he is to buy with it, upon the new form in which it is to come back to him. The first man cannot bear to be distracted from the contemplation of himself. He wants to be saying to himself always, "I am happy! How happy I am!" The other man does not want to think about himself at all; he wants to see his work going on. The first is always finding his life, and yet losing its best result. The other is always losing his life, and yet living with an intensity that the first never knows.

There are, then, these three kinds of men: the spendthrifts of life, or those who value neither life nor its purposes; the misers of life, or those who value life for itself, apart from all its purposes, and so lose the real value out of life itself; and the merchants of life, who value life for what it will do, and so get the best out of life without ever seeking it.

Perhaps we can understand it better if we change our figure. Think of life as a voyage. The truest liver of the truest life is like a voyager who, as he sails, is not indifferent to all the beauty of the sea around him. The morning and the evening sun, the moonlight and the starlight, the endless change of the vast water that he floats on, the passing back and forth of other ships between him and the sky, the incidents and company on his own vessel,—all

these are pleasant to him; but their pleasure is borne up by and woven in with his interest in the purpose for which he undertook the voyage. That lies beyond and that lies under the voyage all the while. He is not sailing just for the sake of sailing. He never would have undertaken the voyage for its own sake. Another man, who has no purpose beyond the voyage, is vexed and uneasy. He is so afraid of not getting the best out of it that he loses its best. The spots and imperfections in its pleasure worry him. Those are the differences of the ways in which men live. One man forgets his own life in the purposes for which his life is lived, and he is the man whose life grows richest and brightest. Another man is always thinking about himself, and so never gets beyond himself into those purposes of living out of which all the fulness of personal life may flow back to him.

It is just as true in separate regions of life as in the whole. In every occupation it is true. A clerk in a store does his work well and benefits himself the most when he thinks about his work, and not about himself. If he is always asking questions about himself: "Am I as happy as I ought to be? Am I appreciated? Am I getting on as fast as I deserve?"—if he does that you know how continually his work is hampered. If his work interests him thoroughly, and he throws himself into it with his whole soul, simply anxious to see it done as well as he can do it; then the work grows, and he grows, and both to their best.

So it is also with the scholar at his books. If he

asks whether he is growing learned, he never really gets the soul of the learning that he seeks. If he can forget himself and study for the pure love of truth, or to bring up some pearl of usefulness out of the deep sea of knowledge, then his learning ripens and mellows day by day. This is the real difference between the mere pedant and dilettante and the true scholar always.

But perhaps we see it clearest of all when we think of man merely as a physical creature, man in his bodily conditions. Certainly the best use of the body is not got by the most anxious care of the body. There is a miserliness of health which is mere invalidism. There are people so careful of their physical force, so afraid of exposing it or wasting it, so afraid of catching cold or getting tired, that they never in all their lives use their physical force for one brave outburst of action. If you could make such people just forget their health entirely, and eagerly plunge into some of the multitudinous work that is waiting to be done, you are sure, not merely that more work would be accomplished, but that their health would be stronger than it is now.

Everywhere, then, self-forgetfulness is necessary for a man to get the best advantage of himself. If we require a name for that continual remembrance of one's self which is a hindrance to every effort, we must take that word which people are rather fond of using nowadays — self-consciousness. It is almost one of the cant words of our time among certain classes of people. Many people talk about it who have very little idea of what self-consciousness

really is; but, if it is really what I have been trying to describe, if it be such a thinking about one's self, in living one's life or doing one's work, that the life is not lived nor the work done at its best,—if this is self-consciousness, then it certainly is not a mere fancy, it is a real thing, really hampering and injuring very many people, and really needing to be got rid of if it possibly can be. It is not to be spoken of with contempt, but seriously.

We sometimes fancy that the hindrance of self-consciousness must be most common in times like ours, times of elaborate civilization and of a great deal that encourages subjective life and the pondering over one's self. We fancy some ruder age and country, where the life should be all fresh and external, where the new-born sons of the soil should live their bright, objective life, too busy in doing the tasks that an unploughed and unplanted earth held out to them to stop to think about themselves, and so getting the best out of life unconsciously. There is certainly some truth in such a fancy. The disease of self-consciousness does especially haunt the places and periods of elaborate culture, where there is more of necessary idleness, and where the work that is done is less immediately and manifestly connected with its results than in more primitive circumstances; but still it is so human that it must have prevailed wherever men have lived to suffer from it. Everywhere some souls must have been hindered and made unhappy by it.

When we look at self-consciousness, it is evident that it has certain traceable stages or degrees. It

busies itself with the question of happiness, or the question of reputation, or the question of goodness. One man is hindered in doing the work that the Lord has given him by continually asking himself, "Am I getting the happiness that I ought to have out of the doing of my work?" Another is impeded by always asking, "Am I doing myself credit in this work of mine?" And yet another is always inquiring for the evidence of growing goodness and holiness, with a minuteness of self-inspection that prevents the very fruits from growing which he is always trying to discover. This last is a far nobler self-consciousness than the others. It cannot grow so morbid that there shall not be something noble in it. It always will be sublime to see any man, in however strange and fruitless fashion, anxious over his own inner life, and eager to know whether the activities in which he is engaged are making him better. That will always be sublime, and never will be very common. But sublime and rare as it may be, still it is evident enough that it very soon reaches a degree in which it is not good. Sure it is that those deeds which have been done in this world, the deeds which most blessed at once the world and the doer, have been those that were done under such a supreme compulsion of the deeds themselves as left no room for any self-questioning of the men who did them. David, St. Paul, Luther, they did not ask whether what they were going to do would help them, even in their best and highest natures. It was the righteousness of the thing itself, the fascination and compulsion of its righteousness, that made them

do it; and then the blessing fell on them almost as much to their surprise as to that of others.

And does not your own experience miniature and confirm David's and St. Paul's? Must not you, too, say, "The things that have made me better have not been the things that I did by any set purpose of self-culture, but the things which attracted me and commanded me? I have always found the richest gold, not when I was hunting for it, but when I was ploughing the field for the harvest it was made to bear."

We can have no idea how much the real effectiveness of our life is hindered by our self-consciousness, by our considering, that is, the effect of our acts upon ourselves, as well as their accomplishment of their own purposes. If we could get rid of self-consciousness, we could do our work so much more easily. With one thing, and only one, to think of —"How can I do this task as well as it is possible for me to do it?"—not asking anything about our being happy in doing it, or about what people will think of the way we do it, or even about whether we shall be made better by doing it,— with such simplicity everywhere, how easy all our work would be! And then again, how much more work we should do! How often our hand is held back from something that evidently ought to be done,—the first healthy impulse to go and do it being restrained and checked by some question that rises about our happiness, or credit, or culture. All the men who have done enormous amounts of work have been characterized by this,—that they forgot themselves in their work.

And yet again, how much more telling our work would be upon other people! There is nothing that so destroys the influence of any act or speech as to feel that the actor or speaker is thinking about himself. There is nothing that puts such force into each, as to know that the actor or speaker has forgotten himself in what he is doing and saying. It seems so simple, and it is so hard. God comes and puts a tool into our hand and says, "Go, do that work; go, dig that ditch, or build that wall"; and we cannot go frankly and do it, and let our happiness, our credit, and our character take care of themselves, or, rather, be taken care of by Him who knew what He was about when He gave us the work. But how truly it is the noblest way, is seen by the admiration with which men look upon one who really accomplishes it, upon a brave man full of love for his work and free from self-consciousness—a servant of God forgetful of himself.

The life of Jesus Christ is the pattern of this lofty self-forgetfulness. Yet even in that pattern humanity, it seems to me, we can sometimes see the first slight movement of those dispositions which, in almost all of us, grow into morbid self-consciousness. When He talks about the foxes having holes and the birds of the air having nests, while He has nowhere to lay His head, He is certainly aware that what He is doing is cutting Him off from the ordinary comforts and happinesses of mankind. When He asks His disciples what the world says about Him, and then what they, His most confiden-

tial friends, believe about Him, there is an evident yearning of the human spirit for that appreciation which it always covets for its highest works. And when, in those unalterably sweet and sacred words at the last supper, He tells His Father that He has finished the work that had been given Him, and, like a tired child begging to be taken home, prays that He may be "glorified" back again into the glory which He had "before the world was," surely His mind was on that development of His own marvellous nature which had been going on along with His work, and which He now felt just on the brink of its completion. All this there certainly was in His life. And these are just the elements that, in our lives, grow into hindering self-consciousness. But who that reads Jesus Christ's story thinks for a single moment that He lived in order to be happy, or in order to be appreciated, or even in order that His own nature might ripen to its fullest? No! that work of His—that work which He loved so, and before which He seemed to stand sometimes so touchingly in awe, that work which He began to do even in His babyhood, which haunted his boyhood, which filled every moment of His working years, to finish which He died at last,—that was the thing He lived for. That was His meat and drink. In His doing of that everything else came to Him; —happiness such as our hearts have never dreamed of; appreciation which has bent all the world's knees at His name; and growth which it bewilders us to think about. He sought the kingdom of God and His rightcousness, and so all other things were

added to Him. So it shall be to us if we can really forget ourselves, and live and die as He did in doing the work of God.

I have said enough to show you where, I think, lies the true secret of escape from the power of self-consciousness that cripples and enfeebles us. Evidently we must have some great purpose in life, strong enough to command us out of ourselves. We must have some great work to do, so imperative and important that we shall not have time to think of ourselves in doing it. We see this wherever any great work does claim a man. The citizen who is wondering whether he is happy enough, whether he is appreciated enough, whether he is getting culture enough, suddenly hears the blast of the trumpet that tells him his country is in danger, and leaps to his feet and rushes to the field, and forgets them all in the devoted doing of a soldier's duty; and happiness, credit, culture, come to him there as they would not come while he sat at home and called them. He gave up seeking them and they flew to him. He lost his life, and then he found it. The multitude followed Jesus from Bethsaida, and left their dinners on the other side of the lake; and by and by they were sitting on the grass by fifties, eating to the fill of bread and fish which His hands had blessed and multiplied.

I know the answer that will come at once: "There is precisely my trouble. If some great task would call me, I could leave myself and follow it. I do not think it strange that Jesus Christ, with a world to save, could forget Himself. But I, with this

small life; I, with these petty cares,—what can I do to shake myself free from myself? what is there left for me but self-consciousness? The ship that has its freight to carry to the Indies may well hurry on its way, and think only of the harbor it is bound to; but the little boat tied to the wharf, and only rising and falling with the sluggish tide, what can it do but keep account of the decay of its slowly rotting planks, and listen to its own sides rubbing and wearing against the piers?"

This is all natural. But the man who says it has lost the whole spirit of his Christianity. He is not talking like a Christian. The Christian is the man redeemed by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died for him, that he might have eternal life. My dear friends, that means something so much deeper than you think. Jesus Christ died for you, to show you that you were a child of God, and that God loved you. He claimed you by His death out of all low slaveries into His service. He showed you that you were capable of serving Him, and that He wanted you. If you can mount up to that idea, and believe that God wants you to do something for Him, will not that be your salvation from self-consciousness? Will you not easily forget yourself, as you stand in His ranks, waiting and listening to hear what He wants you to do? Will not that set you free? Oh, how St. Paul felt this! "You are not your own," he said; "not your own masters, nor your own slaves. You are not your own, you are bought with a price!" And again, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto them-

selves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." That is the Salvation.

And when, to a soul thus waiting, God comes and gives just the familiar homely duties that belong to all of us—the house to keep, the bread to earn, the school to teach—is it not enough? When will we Christians learn that not new and strange tasks, but new and strange solemnity and holiness in our old tasks, is what we are to expect by our conversion! I do not see how any servant in the King's House can think his labor menial or poor, since he ministers in some way to that life by which the kingdom lives. And there is no task of God's giving that is too slight and low for a man to fling his whole soul into it, and by it escape the dangers of self-consciousness, if only he really believes that the task was really given him by God.

The great transcendent truth of man's redemption, and the petty duties of our daily life, stand in a very true and beautiful relationship to one another. They belong together. The truth of redemption would grow too vague and shadowy, if it were not fastened to familiar duties. The duties would grow mean and sordid, if they might not be glorified by being done in thankfulness for the redemption. Our daily duties are like the nails that hold the golden plates upon the walls of the temple. The golden plates would fall but for the nails that hold them; and the nails would only worry and break and blot the wall if it were not for the golden plates they hold.

And so, as the cure of all morbid self-conscious-

ness, I preach to you the power of faithful and devoted work: Do your duty and forget yourself. But I do not preach the dreary gospel of mere Busyness. Not simply by being busy do men escape from their own haunting selves; but by being God's servants men cease to be their own slaves. By a deep experience of sin and pardon you must learn how Christ bought you with His blood; and then, overrunning with gratitude and longing to do anything for Him, nothing that you can do for Him will seem small. Any duty will be strong enough to break your chains and set you free.

It is possible for a man to be so taken up with serving God, whether in great or little tasks, that he never stops to ask for his own happiness or credit or culture; but as he goes on he is happy, though he never thinks of it; and men give him thanks which are more sweet than praises; and Christ is slowly formed within him day by day. So, as he forgets himself, his true self prospers. So, as he loses his life, he finds it where it is hid with Christ in God.

With such a life possible, is it not strange that we can live the lives we do?

XII.

THE NEW BIRTH.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—JOHN iii. 3.

IT is impossible, I think, for any one to read or hear these words of Jesus Christ without remembering what solemn words they have been to multitudes of our fellow-men. There are hardly any words which Christ ever spoke which have more fascinated and held the hearts of earnest men. They have seemed to describe so truly a great mysterious necessity to which the heart itself, conscious of its own needs, has given its assent, without half knowing what it was that was required. "Ye must be born again." "Yes, I know I must be born again. My life must make a fresh start, on a new plan"; the heart, aware how wrong it was, has answered, and then sat wondering with itself what the New Birth might be. The words have opened a gateway of possible escape to many a soul that had seemed utterly imprisoned. They have provoked and eluded many a self-satisfied and easy heart, and set it for the first time to thinking, and wakened its deeper consciousness. And to hearts which God had led through the richest experiences and fully

introduced into the new life, these words have come as the interpretation of their own wonderful history; and nothing has told their own story to themselves so clearly as the words of Jesus when they took them up and said, "I have been born again."

Such sacred associations, such hopes and memories gather around this verse; but still its mystery distresses us. Still, when we hear it, we find ourselves saying with Nicodemus, who heard it first: "How can these things be?" Men are tempted by the sound of thoroughness and authority and hopefulness in it, but still it is very vague to them. I wish that I could make it plainer. I know of course that all descriptions of a spiritual experience must be vague, except to those who have experienced it. No man can intelligibly tell what life is save to the living. But the very fact that Jesus Christ chose this common life of ours, with its beginnings and its endings, to represent the soul's deeper existence, seems to imply that all men who live the physical life may, to some extent at least, understand the spiritual life. At any rate I want to try to make it clearer than it has been to some of us—what Jesus meant when He said that men must be born again.

The fundamental difficulty in understanding the truth of the new birth and the new life lies in attempting to grasp it as a whole, and not in its special activities. All life grows vague if you try to understand its central essence. All life is clear, if you look at its special exhibitions. Ask me what life is in the most commonplace of living men who stands before me, and I utterly fail to tell what it is in its

unfound essence, or where it lurks among the hiding-places of the wondrous body; but when he lifts his hand and strikes, when he opens his mouth and talks, then in a moment I know unmistakably the living man. Now, so it is with the spiritual life. It is hard to tell just what the essence of the new Christian life is in any man. Theologians may contend over that, just as the physiologists contend over the essence of life in the body; but the new functions of the new existence, the way in which each separate power works differently, and each separate act is done differently, in the Christian's experience—this is not hard to trace.

For there are different ways of doing every act, and undergoing every experience of life. There is the superficial and the profound way of doing and being everything. We will start with that. I want you to recognize that, for every deed you do and for every state in which you live, there are two levels; one on which the deed is done or the state is lived in lightly and frivolously; the other, deeper down, in which the same deed is done or the same state lived in, only seriously, profoundly, spiritually. A very large part of the discipline of life consists of crowding men down from the lighter upper level to the deeper lower level. As men are thus transferred from the shallow to the profound form of an experience, it seems at first as if they passed out of the experience altogether; but in the end they find that they are entering into it more completely. There is what we may call a first life and a second life of everything. As the soul passes on from the

first life of anything into the second life of that same thing, it seems to lose it, but only to recover it again. It is born into a certain life, lives that life in its first and shallower form, then dies to it, and afterwards is born to it again in its profounder shape. The first birth, the death, and then the second birth, are everywhere.

This sounds, I doubt not, unintelligible enough, stated thus abstractly; but I want to point you to a series of illustrations and examples of it, which may make it clear. Let them not seem too fragmentary and scattered. They shall come together as the illustrations of one single principle before we close.

1. First, then, as simplest of all, I take the matter of happiness. It is easy to recognize the two levels of happiness, and the way in which men pass from the upper and lighter into the profounder and more serious one. Is this man happy, whom I see in the first flush of youth, just feeling his new powers, the red blood strong and swift in all his veins, the exquisite delight of trying his just-discovered faculties of taste and thought and skill filling each day with interest up to the brim? Is he happy, he with his countless friends, his easy home, the tools and toys of life both lying ready at his hand? Most certainly he is. His days sing as they go, and sparkle with a bright delight that makes the generous observer rejoice for him, and makes the jealous envy him.

But then you lose sight of him for a while, and years after you come on him again. The man is changed. All is so altered! Everything is sobered. Is he happy still? As you look into his face you

cannot doubt his happiness a moment, but neither can you fail to see that this new happiness is something very different from that which sparkled there before. This is serene and steady, and as you look at it you see that its newness lies in this: that it is a happiness in principles and character, while the other was a happiness in circumstances. The man whom you used to know was happy because everything was right about him, because his self was thoroughly indulged, because the sun shone and he was strong. The man whom you know now is happy because there is goodness in the world, because God is governing it, because in his own character the discipline of God is going on. The first sort of happiness was self-indulgent; the new sort is built on and around self-sacrifice. The man you left was "enjoying himself," as we say; the man you find is at peace in God. And to reach that peace in God, in principles, he must have lost his old self-enjoyment. The loss may have been violent, or it may have been easy. He may have been torn and wrung away from his selfishness, or the strings that bound him to it may have been gently untwisted; but, however it has come, he has died to his superficial enjoyment of self and entered into a deeper happiness, which could have come only through that death.

Can we not see the three levels as they lie under one another—the surface-life of enjoyment in which men are frolicking or basking; the middle-life of disappointment in which souls are struggling, as they let go the old to take the new; and the under-life of peace, where men and women are at rest in God?

When we make ourselves spectators in the world, how often as we look at some man whom we know we can seem to see him enter the uppermost of these layers of life, and then pass down as if a great hand pressed him, till he rests in the profoundest; beginning with selfish enjoyment, passing thence into disappointment, and then into godly peace; born into superficial pleasure, dying to that in discontent, and born again into profound and peaceful joy.

2. Or take another point, the point of knowledge. There is a shallow and a deep, an upper and a lower knowledge. The quick perception that catches the mere outside of things, and, recognizing the current condition of affairs, is able to throw itself in with them and so achieve a certain cheap success; and the calm, philosophic wisdom which looks down to the roots of things and sees their causes, and really helps to govern them—those are the two. Many a young man, in politics or in business or in the church, starts with the first of these. He knows all the outside of things. People's small ways and habits, their superficial symptoms, he is familiar with them all. He prides himself upon his knowledge. But what happens, by and by? Something occurs that teaches him his ignorance; and then, baffled, confused, dismayed, his old knowledge lying dead at his feet, he is born again into a profounder knowledge of the heart of things, into a wisdom which is moral and spiritual as well as intellectual, of the heart and conscience as well as of the head.

Have you never heard a man talking flippantly to-day of the world's system, of the government of

life, of the secrets of existence? and to-morrow some blow, some surprise has come right into the midst of his knowledge and killed it. Things have gone entirely different from what he expected, from what he prophesied. He has found how ignorant he is, and has been driven to the deeper understanding of a Will that works under everything, to that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge, ignorance, wisdom—here are the strata of life again; the first birth into one, death through the second, and a new birth into the third.

3. Our doctrine applies perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the matter of religious faith. There is a first faith and a second faith. The first faith is the easy, traditional belief of childhood, taken from other people, believed because it belongs to the time and land. The second faith is the personal conviction of the soul. It is the heart knowing, because God has spoken to it, the things of God, the after-faith that means communion. The first faith has a certain regulative force, but it has no real, life-giving power in it. The second faith is full of life. It, and it alone, is the belief which brings salvation. What comes between the two, many of you can tell out of your own experience. Between the shallow faith and the profound, between the faith of tradition and conviction, comes so often doubt. Not always. Sometimes the old faith dies into the new as gently as the morning opens into noon, or the spring spreads its full life abroad and is the summer. That is the best and noblest way. But often between the seasons comes the equinoctial storm. The

old traditional faith is shaken with the wind of doubt. The tempest lasts through a long night, perhaps, before the morning dawns in sunshine, and the soul knows what it believes and why, and is filled with the energy and peace of the deeper faith. Mere faith of tradition does not save a man, or bring him unto God. Except he be "born again" into a faith of personal conviction, he cannot see God's kingdom. Faith of tradition—doubt,—faith of conviction,—so lie the strata of the deepening life through which many of the best and ripest souls have passed.

4. Or take another region of our life. Think of our friendships and the way they deepen. There is the first friendship of mere sentiment, the easy liking by which boys and girls are drawn together at school, or men in the same street or hotel. Such intimacies usually depend upon indulgence. Your friend must flatter and agree with you; he must think like you and be like you; that is the bond that fastens you to one another. The pleasure of a kindred spirit who will treat you well, and fall in with your wishes, and keep alive your self-esteem, —that is what draws you to him, and makes you haunt the places where you know that he will be. But, by and by, that bond breaks. Some jar comes in, some incongruity appears. You do not think alike. He will not bend to all your whims; and in some disappointment at his non-compliance, the easy sentimental friendship of your moral childhood dies.

And what then? Do we not know? The question is whether you are man enough to substitute

a man's friendship for that mere childish intimacy. Can you give up the shallow pleasure of hearing your opinions echoed, and having all your fancies indulged, and like a man meet another manly soul, and submit to the rebukes of his example, yield to him where he is a better man than you, mount with a strain and effort up to his level, or forgive and try to help him where he fails and disappoints you? A boy's fondness and a man's friendship! Have you not friends with whom you began superficially, but with whom you are now living profoundly? Think of John and James, leaving the boat and following Jesus Christ because His voice charmed them; then disappointed in Him because he did not set up the kingdom they desired; at last, drinking of His cup and being baptized with the baptism of martyrdom for Him. Easy fondness, discovered differences, deep friendship,—these are the levels in the life which we live with one another.

5. Take another illustration from man's tendency to be self-satisfied. There is a bad and a good self-satisfaction. The bad self-satisfaction is only too common. It is what we call self-conceit. A man seems to himself sufficient for everything. There is no task that he will not accept. He does not look outside himself. The strength is in his own arm, which he can make strong as iron to subdue his foes; in his own heart, which he can make hard as a rock to bear his troubles. For doing or enduring he needs nothing but himself. He can do anything. That self-conceit must die, or the man is a failure. Somehow or other, the man must learn that in

himself he can do nothing. Then comes humility; and when in his humility he casts himself upon another strength, and expects to do nothing save in the power of God, then he is born again into a new self-satisfaction. To find himself taken by God; to feel that God is giving him His strength; to say, "I can do anything through Christ"; to face the world not in his own power, but in his Master's—that is the new, the deeper self-satisfaction. He has fallen from the old, through self-contempt, into this new. Self-contempt is not the permanent place for any human soul. The man despises himself only that he may find a new self which he cannot despise, the self which God made, the self for which Christ died, the self which has great, solemn duties here and the heritage of eternity awaiting it. That is a self that he must honor and respect. He has fallen out of self-conceit through the vast void of self-contempt, only to be caught in the great hands of God, who knows the value of his soul. Oh, prone as we are to sink and not to rise, let us be thankful that God is under us to catch us when we fall, as well as over us to receive us when we rise to Him.

6. One more illustration, and let it be the solemnest of all—the history of the fall and the recovery of the moral life; that account which is written for us in the endlessly appealing story of the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. There is a first and second goodness. Man is born into a garden, as that story runs. Right impulses, perceptions that the good is better and more beautiful than the bad—these are not wanting in the early, the unregenerate life.

And yet that life is unregenerate. It must be born again. Those good impulses, that mere sense of the beauty of goodness, that ignorance of vice, are not the true strength of the moral man, in which he can resist temptation and really grow to God. That fails. He dies out of that; and, once out of that, he never can go back to it again. The angels and the flaming sword are at the gate, to keep any man who has been innocent, and sinned, from ever returning to innocence again.

You who read the strange first pages of your Bible, and wonder whether in their strangeness they be true or not, would it not be well if you could turn the current of your thoughts, and think how wonderfully true those pages are to you and to the life that you have lived? Do you remember when you were pure, when no foul thought had ever crossed your mind, when no wind from any quarter stirred one passionate desire? What a garden life was then! How God Himself walked with you among its trees!

And then the devil came. One day you lusted for impurity. Some temptation, no bigger than an apple, was too strong for you. Have you ever gone back? Has there been one moment since which is like what all the moments and the months were before? Has not a flaming sword been at the gate out of which you passed with that first lustful thought or deed? Has not your life, like all the Bible history, thenceforth strained and reached forward to a second goodness, to be gained only by forgiveness and by struggle?—a holiness that knows wickedness

and has escaped from it,—not a garden into which man was born at first, but a heaven into which he has been brought past the very mouth of hell. Innocence, Sin, Redemption—these are the birth, the death, and the new birth of the moral life. It was all written first in the Bible, and it is written anew in the experience of every man who comes to God.

I will not multiply our illustrations. Here are more than enough. And now, what have we reached? What is our doctrine? Here, everywhere, in everything we do and are, there is a first and second way of doing or of being it; the first a shallow, light, unspiritual way of being happy, of knowing things, of believing truth, of knowing people, of valuing ourselves, or of doing right; the second, a profound and serious and spiritual way of doing those same things. Here are the two clear strata of life. One lies under the other. The parts correspond; the actions are the same; but every act has grown profound and rich and earnest, as you pass from the first into the second. Now take those acts; combine them, and they make a life; they make a man. Combine them in the upper, lighter level, and they make a light and superficial man; combine them in the deeper level and they make a strong, profound man. For it is these acts and states which make up a man's manhood. As a man enjoys, knows, believes, makes his friends, values his life, attains to goodness, so he is. These are the constituent elements of life. Their aggregate makes up the man. Let him do all these lightly, and the man is light. If he does all these profoundly, then he is profound.

Now, where is the first man to be found, the man who does all these life-actions in the first, the lightest way? Need I tell you? Is he not all about you? Here, in the world that sparkles all over with mere gayety, that rings with superficial information, shallow belief, the noisy intimacies of an hour; in the world full of men tumid with self-conceit, men who know no higher law of right than impulse, is not our first man everywhere in this world? Bright, pleasant, quick, friendly, we meet him at every turn—the man who, intellectually, morally, spiritually, lives on the surface always. There is no suggestion of eternity or of the other world in anything he says or does or is. He belongs entirely to time and earth. He enjoys and knows and believes and loves in the first way. He is the man of the first creation, what the Bible calls the "natural man." He has only entered into the upper layer of life. He has been born only once. The Bible has just the account of him which we have tried to give, when it says that he is the "first Adam."

And then, where is the second kind of man?—the man who does all these great life-actions in the second way, who is profound in his happiness, his wisdom, his belief, his friendship, his self-respect, his holiness; the man in whom each of these acts is done at its fullest and richest? Ah, there is one Life whose happiness goes so deep that the world loses it and calls it misery, whose wisdom is so profound that the world loses sight of it and calls it folly, whose faith is the constant witness of its own nature, whose friendship is the perfection of sympathy,

whose self-respect is the self-consciousness of the Son of God, whose holiness is perfection. Can you feel, as you read the life of Jesus Christ, that He was truly human, and yet that He carried every human action and experience down to its profoundest and filled it full of richness? Can you understand that you are happy and Jesus Christ was happy, and yet that His happiness lies far down under yours, His peace under your gayety, as a deeper and profounder thing; that all the things which you do lightly He does seriously, what you do carnally He does spiritually? If you can see that, then you understand what I mean by saying that Jesus Christ lived in the second way,—what St. Paul meant when he said that in Him we have the "second Adam."

And then, what next? If Christ really has the power of bringing men to be like His manhood; if, as St. Paul says, the second Adam "was made a quickening spirit"; not merely a "living soul," subsisting for Himself, but a "quickening spirit," enlivening others into His likeness; then it is He that draws men down and transfers them from the superficialness of the first to the depth of the second life. He takes them, living superficially, and, fastening them to Himself by His love awakening theirs, makes them live profoundly. He takes them, living the first life, and makes them live the second life. The beginning of life is birth. The beginning of a new life is the new birth; and so the coming by Christ into that deeper world where Christ lives, into that Kingdom of God which is His home, is

being "born again"; and except one is born again he cannot enter there.

That seems so plain. That is as plain as we can make it to ourselves, until it becomes part of our own experience; and then a flood of perfect light runs over all of it, and we grow impatient at the startling imperfectness of any description of that which has become so gloriously clear to us. Christ takes us to Himself. That is, by the power of love we gradually grow more and more like Him. As that change slowly goes on in us our life slowly deepens. Down from the surface to the soul of things He draws us. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be"; He is fulfilling that promise in our lives. We used to be happy when circumstances were prosperous; He makes us incapable of any real happiness without the sense of goodness. He makes us impatient of any knowledge that does not go back and find His intention. The soul which He has called gives up merely traditional belief, and holds to its own personal assurance of Him. It learns from His friendship to count no friendship real save heart-communion. Losing its self-conceit, it acquires a deep, daily, self-satisfaction in His service. Learning its sinfulness, it enters on the obedient and grateful holiness of the forgiven soul. Everywhere the strong power of Christ draws it down from the shallow into the profound. The deeper life of everything is evident to it. It is satisfied with nothing but the roots of things. It passes from the weak life to the strong life, from the shallow life to the deep life, by Christ. It is "born

again" by the power of Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life."

Born again! The new birth! Oh, these old words which so many souls have puzzled over and could not understand, and yet have been fascinated by so that they could not let them go! In silent chambers souls have agonized and wondered, "What is it to be born again?" In silent chambers, souls, conscious of a richer and fuller life, have dreamed and questioned timidly: "Is it possible, then, that this is the new birth? Have we come any nearer to an answer to it all to-day? Have we passed from the shallow life to the profound, from the unspiritual to the spiritual, from the first life to the second?"

My dear friends, do not believe that that change can ever come to a man by any mere course of nature. As you grow older you become mature and sober; your first excitements chill, your follies grow less flagrant. It is easy for you to think that tameness wisdom, and cheat yourself into believing that because the pool of life grows stagnant it grows deep. The profoundness and spirituality of the new man is not the mere result of age. Old men and women may be very shallow, and little children may be already drawn by the Saviour whom they love down into the deepness of His life. Not by mere growing old, not by piling years upon years, not by continuing the shallow life forever does life grow deep; but by beginning a new life, by having our whole nature taken possession of by the strong new power of gratitude to Him who died for us; by being born again through love of Him into like-

ness of Him. So only does the life deepen as we look deeper into it; its petty waves grow still and there is peace; its noisy feebleness is swallowed up and folded into a calm strength. The bed on which it flows sinks away from us till we lose sight of it altogether, and when we gaze down into it we see Eternity.

As we enter into Christ these great things come to us. Oh, I plead with you for a profounder life! It will not come to you with the mere lapse of events and years. You may grow old, and your white hair will cover as vacant laughter and as unmeaning tears, as idle thoughts and trivial fancies, as you carry about now. You must take Christ—you must let Christ take you and draw you down into Him, that you may see everything in Him. Then everything will be new to you, and you will be new to everything. The life that you then live in the flesh, you will live by the faith of the Son of God. You will have been born again; you will have entered into the kingdom of God.

XIII.

LIGHT FROM DARKNESS.

"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"—MATTHEW vi. 23.

THERE are many truths and teachings in these deep words of Jesus. I have turned to them more than once before for the help and guidance which they contain; and there are no fitter words in all our Saviour's teaching to bring us the idea which I now wish to dwell upon. That idea is that every man has his own point of entrance for the divine life, and that if he does not let it in through that door,—nay, if his soul does not stand at that door waiting to welcome it, the divine life may pass him by and he will be responsible. He will not only be the loser; he will be to blame for the earthliness and darkness in which his life goes on. So vague and loose and unreasonable are the thoughts of most people as to the way in which men become Christians; so often it seems to most people as if it were all a mystery, without explanation and without law, as to whether God would come to men with His Spirit, and as to how He would come; that I think it must be a great help to us if we can clearly understand that there is such a principle as this: that

every man has his strong, characteristic point of temperament, of occupation, or of circumstances, where, if the Spirit of God ever does come to him, it will be sure to come, and by the nature of which the nature of the spiritual life which is possible for him must be determined.

I may not be sure that the great royal guest who is travelling through the land will come into my poor house; but I know that, if he does come, he will have to come up just that homely path and through that humble doorway which lead to it; therefore I keep its passage clear and its bolts drawn back. I do not know that the sun will shine out from behind the cloud; but I know that if it does, this and this are the bright summit-points which it must kindle into flame, and from which its glory must be reflected to all the rest of the great building. I do not know that I can ever win the friendship of such and such a man, who is far wiser and more than I am; but I know that my only chance is not in trying to be something which I am not, or in pretending to be it, but solely in being frankly and thoroughly what I am, and in offering him that nature for his life to play upon and for his heart to love, if he can love it. I do not know that I can ever understand this idea which other men seem to make much of—this philosophy which all mankind are praising, this school of thought which evidently has great truth in it—I do not know that I can ever make it mine; but I do know that if I ever do get hold of it, it must be with this particular hand of my nature that I seize it, and so my study shall

be to keep this hand, in which my hope lies, flexible and alert.

All these are illustrations of one truth from various regions of life. In every region there is some point through which the darkness of the whole region must be reached by any light. If light comes, it must be caught there and radiated thence throughout the whole. Upon that point, then, anxiety fastens itself, and that point becomes critical. To that point the warning applies: "If the light become darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Now, I think that what a great many men need is to realize that just that is true about religion. There is some point in their nature, their occupation, or their circumstances, something in them made up from their nature, their occupation, or their circumstances, which marks how they are to be Christians, and what sort of Christians they are to be. Religion does not fall into a nature like a shower from the clouds. It enters like a guest into the gate. Every man may say this much of himself: I do not know that I can ever be religious, but if I am, I am such a man, so built by nature and so shaped by circumstances, that it is thus and thus that my religion must come in. And when a man has realized that, then self-study must become a very serious and earnest thing, and the responsibility for the open door of his own soul a very distinct and ever-present consciousness. The watch over the light that is in him, lest it should turn into darkness, must be a continual care.

Let us follow this somewhat more into detail. I

have alluded to the nature, the occupations, and the circumstances of men as the elements which decide what sort of door in them shall open to religion. And we may speak in turn of each of these.

1. And, first, about men's natures. There are broad, deep differences of character which decide for men the nature of their Christian life. They make great chasms. He who is a Christian on one side of them, is different from him who is a Christian on the other. Lift up your eyes and look at the difference of the very essential natures of men, as they stand together in our picturesque and various humanity. One class or division of men lives in thought. Everything is to them a problem. Another class lives in action. Everything is to them a task. There are the men of solitude, who seek to be alone as naturally as the beast flees into the forest; and there are the men of society who seek to be together as naturally as the cattle collect themselves in herds. Some men are always conservative; they cannot do a rash thing. Other men are all enterprise; they cannot do a prudent thing. Some men are intrinsically self-reliant. Other men must rest their hand upon some brother's shoulder, and then they can do valiant work. Some men are credulous and long to believe. Other men are skeptical, and to doubt is to them as native as to breathe. Everywhere are the differences of natures. There need be no end to the enumeration.

And what do these differences mean? What shall we say about them? What shall we think when, out of the confusion of our own self-watched lives, there

comes gradually forth a consciousness of what we are, of what the special nature is in us that separates and distinguishes us from other men? Shall we merely be fascinated and dazzled with the sparkling variety of life in general? Shall we simply be humbled or exalted with the smallness or the glory of the separate distinctive quality which we discover in our own selves? If there is a higher life for man to live, if there is a sunshine which may break over all this human landscape and transfigure it, then to any man who knows that such a sunshine is, and who expects its dawning, the landscape as a whole, and every bit of it, must get its value from its actual or possible relationship to that sunshine. Every variety of character must be prized because it can catch the life, the love, the authority, of God, in some way especially its own; and every man's own nature, as he comes to know it, must interest him because he knows, in knowing it, how he is to know God, whom truly to know is truly and thoroughly to live.

Our modern novels study character with wonderful acuteness. Our essayists depict the infinite variety of men which exists within the evident unity of man. Men pore over themselves, and make themselves proud or miserable with understanding or misunderstanding what they are. It is poor business, unless man knows what man is for; and is seeking to know himself only that he may open himself more abundantly to God. Take for instance the last of the kinds of character of which I spoke just now: a man studies his own nature, and says

as the result, "Yes, I am skeptical. I question everything. I cannot help it. It is innate. I did it when I was a child. I shall do it till I die. I shall do something like it after I am dead and am gone to heaven. What then? Is that a sign that there is no Christian faith for me, and an excuse from all responsibility to seek it? Surely not. That very skepticism must be the door by which I must stand to keep the passage pure and clear. I must be responsible for it. I must not merely doubt men's affirmations; I must doubt my own doubts. I must question the denials that men bring. I must keep my questioning faculty pure of conceit, and so out of this sifting of doubt on doubt, at last the precious kernel of truth may lie there shining and manifest, — not wrapt in so many envelopes, perhaps, as some other men wrap their belief in, and so not looking as if it were as large as theirs, but yet all there, and all the more clearly there, all the more strongly held, because of the very, native skepticalness of the soul that holds it."

This must be so. Either the questioning temper is a disease, and not a nature, which all our experience tells us is not the truth; or else there are some souls built by the God that made them as if one built a house for himself to dwell in, but built it standing on its outside, and left no door for himself, its destined occupant, to get in at when it was done. Either one or other of these things is true. Or else a doubting temper, if it be pure and not dimmed and blocked up with self-conceit, may be itself a window for God to shine through, a door for

God to come through. There was a faith in Thomas by reason of his doubt, not merely in spite of his doubt. His doubt was the light that was in him.

Here is a kind of self-study and self-knowledge which is precious indeed. Here is a value for our own peculiar nature which brings to one who has it a quiet, grave, and lofty self-respect and joy, in being what he is, that is as pure of self-conceit as it is filled with solemn responsibility.

Why is it that you love the house where you have lived from your childhood,—that you honor it and would be very sorry to live in any other? You know it is not the best house in town; there are better houses by the score; but this is yours. In it your life has taken shape. In through its window the sky and sun and stars have looked at you and given you impressions of themselves. In through its doors your friends have entered with their influences. The shapes of its rooms, the windings of its passages, have formed the habits in which the joy and sorrow of your life have taken coloring. And so the value of your home is in the way in which life has come to you through it.

Very like indeed, I think, to men's relations to their homes is their relation to their natures. In the qualities of their natures, as in the walls of their houses, their selves abide, which are one with and yet are other than the natures they abide in; and through them to this inner self comes God. And the soul that has learned to love God forever honors and loves the nature through which God came to it,

with that special manifestation of Himself which is its life.

2. Think, secondly, about the occupations of our lives, and see how they, too, get their real significance and value as the entrance-points of God into us, and the exhibition-points of God through us to other men. You sit here in church, in this Sunday promiscuousness, the representatives of very various occupations. You did different things yesterday. You will do different things to-morrow. One of you sells goods, another builds houses, another pleads causes, another counts money, another cures sickness: what does it all mean? Is it merely a convenient distribution of the work that has been done in the world, as if the master of a house said to one servant, "You sweep the sidewalk while another piles the wood"? Must it not be far more than that? Remember how we spend our lives in doing these different things. Remember that the powers which the doing of these different things calls out in us are widely different. And if the giving of God's life to a man's life is always in connection with some human activity, some action of its powers,—if God cannot give Himself to a totally passive creature,—must it not follow that according to the sort of activity that prevails in our lives, so will be our reception of God, our relation to His authority and love and teaching, which is our religion?

Let any religious man among you suppose that the whole occupation of his life had been different from what it has been; suppose that all these years you had been tilling the ground instead of selling

goods, or building houses instead of teaching schools; could your religion have been just what it has been, just what it is to-day? If so, then your religion must have been a very limited and partial thing, a candle burning in some shut and sacred chamber of your life, not a true fire burning all though your life and keeping it all ablaze. And what a terrible waste there has been if all your professional life, all your life in your trade or occupation, has been kept so purely secular that it has given no character to your religion! It is sure to be equally true that it has got no character from your religion either. No; in a true sense a man's occupation is his living. It is the true front door to his life. By it the visitor or the occupant of the life must come in.

What you ought to teach your boy, when he makes the selection of his work in life, is that the deepest and most critical value of that selection is that he is really choosing in what way he shall ask the God to whom his life belongs to come and take possession of his life. And when his selection is once made, you ought to make him know that there, in his profession, is where he is to look for God to come to him. It is in the power to resist its special temptations that he is to learn what wonderful strength God can give. It is in the training of the peculiar powers of usefulness which it develops that he is to receive God's gracious education. It is in the consolation of its peculiar sorrows that he is to lay hold of God's abounding comfort; and it is in the character which his profession, at its best, demands, that he is to manifest the life of God before mankind.

Such a conviction about any man's profession, filling his soul as he went into it, would have two good results. It would at once enlarge it and sanctify it. To the Christian merchant, the man who is so thoroughly a merchant that he sees clearly that if he is to be a Christian at all, it is a merchant Christian that he must be,—to such a man his mercantile life enlarges itself until it becomes for him the type of all service of God, and puts him into communion and sympathy with all God's servants everywhere; and, at the same time, being his special form of service, it acquires a sacredness and is done with a scrupulousness that no merely secular occupation, considered only as secular, could command.

It is this union of largeness and specialness that makes the truest beauty of all human life. The man whose sense of his own personalness is most intense, and yet who in it reads the parable of the greater personality of Man, and through it is kept in truest sympathy with all his race; he always is the richest and most interesting man. The landscape that fascinates you with its own clear beauty, and at the same time suggests the beauty of all the variously beautiful world, is always the most powerful to satisfy the soul. And so the task that twines your conscientious interest into its minute details and at the same time makes you one with all workers in all faithful work,—that is the task which most feeds the life of him who does it. And such a character belongs not to any one occupation or class of occupations, but to any occupation occupied religiously, to any duty done in conscious obedience

to God, and valued as the means by which He with His help and authority and teaching may come in and take possession of the soul.

3. I spoke of the natures of men and of their occupations as making them special points for the reflection of the light of God, and I spoke also of their circumstances. "If the light that is in thee be darkness how great is that darkness!" says Christ, and I think that His words may well apply to any peculiar condition into which He leads one of our lives, and by which He means to make at once a deeper entrance into that life, and a larger illumination from it. There is something lost when any experience which God meant to have burn with Himself is allowed to stand dark in irreligiousness.

A man goes down a street as night comes on, and lights the long row of lamps so that by and by the whole street is bright. But in the long row there is one lamp which refuses to be lighted, and will not burn, or which goes out after the man with the torch has passed on his way. What is the consequence? Will there not be all night a dark spot in the street, where that unlighted lamp comes? Will not each passenger stop there or stumble? Will not the stones or pitfalls that lie just there be the most dangerous? and will not that one unlighted spot make the whole street unsafe, no matter how brightly all the rest may shine? So God, I think, goes down our life and touches every experience with Himself, and as every experience becomes conscious of having come from Him and of possibly revealing Him, it burns with Him. With the burning

of all those experiences with God, our whole life becomes gradually alight.

But now, suppose that there is one experience which, as God touches it, refuses to be lighted, or, after He has lighted it, goes out. There is one thing which has happened to us which we never can think of as having come from God; what will the consequence be? Will there not always be one dark spot just there in the long street of our life? Will not the temptations and the doubts which arise in connection with that one event be always specially dangerous, and will not our whole life, no matter how bright the illumination of all the rest may be, be always unsafe because of that one unlighted experience?

Oh, how many lives there are which have some such unilluminated experience somewhere in them! Something happened to you once which you never could believe that God sent, or which you have never been able to keep associated with Him. Your child died, and you could not believe that He took it. Your child recovered, and you could not believe that He restored it. You made a fortune, and it seemed the triumph of your own shrewdness. You made a friend, and it seemed the triumph of your own attractiveness. You rose up from a sick bed, and thanked nobody but the doctors. You did a hard duty, and congratulated yourself upon the self-respect that had kept you from being mean or cruel. What is the consequence? Just at that point there is a lamp unlighted in your life. Whenever your memory goes by that point, it stumbles; for it walks

in darkness. Whenever you have to meet those same emergencies again, to welcome back another child from the grave's mouth, or to see another child depart from you to God, or to make another friend, or to resist a new temptation, no light comes streaming out from the old experience to make the new one plain. What is there left for us but to cry out after Him who is the Light-giver that He will come back, and even now touch that old dark experience with His illumination, so that it may be a help and not a hindrance, a light and not a darkness, in our lives?

This is the way, then, in which circumstances or experiences become interpreters of God, His points of introduction to our lives. And here again there is the same meeting of specialness with generalness of which I spoke before. God comes into our life through one experience, but having come through that experience He spreads Himself then through all the life, He occupies the entire house. There are many histories among you, my friends, that will bear testimony to this. God revealed Himself to you first when He cured you of your sickness, but the God who then came to you, you have found since, is One who can do many another thing besides making sick people well. Nay, so complete is the knowledge of Himself that He gives us, when He has once entered into us, that very often the God who showed Himself first as the Healer of sickness has appeared by and by again as the Sender of sickness, and even as the Summoner of souls by death, and has been recognized through all the tears of

sorrow by that first knowledge of Him which was won in the bright atmosphere of joy.

Before I close let me say one word more. I have dared to talk to-day as if the special care of God for every man, and for every act and experience of every man, were not too great a thought for man to think, not too vast or incredible a faith for man to hold. To some people, to many people, it does seem incredible. But, oh, remember that unless we believe that, there is no real vitality in our religion. And ought it to be incredible if we understood what God is? The sun shines down upon a mountain side, and every pebble catches its splendor and shines back its answer. And if you say, "But the sun has no feeling, no affection," then think of a great family and, tell me, does a true father grow bewildered among his children, and love or protect the least less than the greatest? Only make fatherhood perfect and infinite, and you have God. It is only the essential difficulty of grasping the infinite that makes it so hard to conceive that God can care for all His children personally, and never forget the feeblest of them.

And yet, hard as it is, men do believe it. Christ makes men believe it. We cannot live with Him and not believe it; because He believes it so intensely, He knows it so clearly. Let us try to live very near to Him, and then we cannot help believing it, cannot help knowing it; and then we cannot walk in darkness, but shall surely have the Light of Life.

XIV.

AVERAGE AND ABSOLUTE VIRTUE.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, Resist not evil."—MATTHEW v. 38 (R. V.).

IT is not of the special injunction of Christ in these words that I want to speak, but of the general spirit which inspires this and a great many others of our Lord's commandments. Christ found a host of men who had simply accepted the standards of their time. They found a certain type and degree of conscientiousness current around them. Jerusalem expected them to be as good as this standard, and asked of them no more. Moses and David, in the course of centuries, pressed flat by the hard, unsympathetic hands of commentators, pared down and explained away by the necessities of practical living, had degenerated from great spiritual inspirations into sets of rules. Everything had become formal. The world had fixed its standard of how good a man should be, and no man was expected to be better than his world.

We can well imagine with what spirit Christ must have faced that state of things. With His informal soul, with His spontaneous freedom, with His sense

of God and man, with His firm conviction that man was the child of God, and that there was no limit to the degree of nearness to his Father into which every man might come, the whole system of hard limitations must have been odious to Him. His soul desired the sky, and men had built a roof against which every man just grazed his head, and which shut the sky out from their aspiration altogether. Therefore came His protests fast and warm. Men say, "You shall not kill"; I say, "You shall not hate." Men say, "You shall not commit adultery"; I say, "You shall not lust." Men say, "You shall not swear falsely"; I say, "You shall not swear at all." Men say, "You shall love your friends"; I say, "You shall love everybody."

Can we not picture to ourselves how words like these of Jesus must have come to many a generous young spirit in Jerusalem as the Master spoke? "Lo, then, it is not wrong, or foolish, or conceited, this sense of which my heart has been full—that men have got the whole thing too hard and small. It is, then, right,—this desire, this struggle to be better than my world. Listen, my heart, and hear, oh, hear what He is saying now: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.'"

No picture of Christ is clearer in the Gospels than that in which He is seen standing face to face with human life, and uttering His call to men. "Be better than your world," He cries. He opened the great door of a completer life, and said to all His hearers, "Go in there." Some, the few, heard and obeyed. Many, the most, drew back. What call was there

for them to be more holy than their fellows? But how often, to the best of them,—as afterwards all through their life they went their way, quenching their higher impulses and drilling themselves into conformity with the world's standards,— the call which they once heard must have come back as the memory of the morning comes back to the hot and dusty noon, and they must have stopped a moment, and dreamed of how, if they had listened to that voice, they might have lived different lives, might have been better than their world.

I wish that I could make you hear that voice today. You need to hear it; for everywhere around us, when a man aspires after a life in any way larger or better than the average of the life by which he is surrounded, there come two results; first a misgiving in himself, and secondly an outcry from his neighbors. It is so in all departments. You are moved to believe some richer doctrine than the special creed which you have been taught contains. And then your own heart rises up and you say, "Who am I that I should find out truth which my fathers did not know?" Or you are moved to question something which has been long and widely held for true; and again your heart is ready with its cry, "Has not this dogma held mankind for generations? Why should I stir myself? Let me quietly accept it." Or there comes some moan into your ears out of the mass of misery which we call poverty; and you start up to go out and help it; and all the selfishness around you lifts up its voice in wonder. You set yourself against some commonly accepted business

fraud, or blunder; and all the business world, according as it thinks your protest dangerous or simply silly, calls you knave or fool. You remonstrate against the action of your political party, and your party is only troubled to know whether you are a hypocrite or a Pharisee. You plead for purer social life, and society gazes at you with a stony stare. You cannot hide so carefully the effort to make your own soul purer and holier but that the world feels this strange thing which is going on in it, and with something almost like indignation wonders why you need be so scrupulous and fine. So it is everywhere.

I would not seem to think that this is the only feeling which the effort of any man to be better than his world excites. I do not ignore, I am sure, either that enthusiastic hope which springs up in the struggling soul itself, or that instinctive homage and respect which, under all contempt and opposition, still exists to greet the man who is not satisfied to live merely in the average of his brethren. Those are real things. But also real is that dislike, that disposition to recall and repress his endeavor, which welcomes the adventurous man. Partly it is because he rebukes the self-satisfied lethargy of other men. That is not all the reason. But, be the reason what it may, the fact exists. Each brave man meets and has to face it. And so I ask you to study it with me a little while.

The first thing which we wish to understand, if we can, is what is the meaning of the fact we have to deal with, and whence it comes. What is this general standard of morality and life, below which

a man cannot fall without disgrace, but above which it is not wholly safe for a man to try to rise? It is a strange phenomenon. It is not uniform. It varies most unaccountably in different times and places. It is, no doubt, in a rude way, the expression of the height which the average virtue, in any given place or time, has attained, the tide-mark of the morality of this especial time and place.

But there is more account than that to give of it. The public standard is very apt to bear the mark of three causes which are very temporary and local, but which must make themselves felt where they exist. The first of these is the especial need of the especial time. Certain virtues are particularly valued, and certain vices are made light of, because of the peculiar condition which society has reached. The vices which seem most dangerous are most condemned and hated. Thus, in our newer Western communities, theft is punished with summary severity, while baser crimes are made but little of. To steal a horse has sometimes been thought worse than to kill a man. The second of these influences is the power of reaction. Some long-neglected virtue by and by gets its chance, and wins for itself an excessive prominence. Thus, after a long period of bigotry, toleration for a time appears to be the one excellence worth cultivating. Thirdly, there is the power of some dominant character, or some great public teacher, who for the time makes the form of goodness which he most admires shine before the eyes of the community which has its eyes fixed on him. So Dr. Channing once in Boston, so

Thomas Carlyle in England, gave utterance to types of character which, both in their excellencies and their limitations, became almost the fixed laws of their people and their times.

The peculiar need of a special place in a special stage of development, the reaction from some previous standard, and the force of some strong character,—these, I think, are the elements which unite to make that strange thing which we call the standard of the time. When it is once made, how strange and strong it is! It is tyrannical. For the time it seems to have embodied the absolute and eternal goodness. It is intangible, but very real. The strongest and the weakest feel it. He who suggests that there is much about it which is temporary, and which the next generation will see altered, is counted an enemy of goodness, a traitor to morality. This, which, underneath the immediate and superficial explanations of it, is really the stage in the great onward movement of human life that has been reached at any point of time, is the phenomenon which every man encounters in the present life in which he lives; and it is the sight which every student of history sets himself to study as he looks back into the past. Just as, when you look across a stretch of ocean, you see the different colors in the water which show how various are the degrees of depth; so, as you look across the centuries, you see how every age has its own hue, which reveals to you what virtues it most valued and what vices it most dreaded, and whether the standard of its public and its private life were deep or shallow, high or low.

And now the question is: what ought to be the relation of any one man, living in a particular age, to this moral standard of his age? He evidently cannot be independent of it. He cannot live in a base age just as he would have lived in one of those finer and more spiritual ages which certainly occur, and in which it often seems as if it would be so very easy to be good and brave and pure. On the other hand, he certainly cannot be the slave and puppet of his time, losing his responsibility in its responsibility, and counting it either hopeless or disloyal to think of being better than the world he lives in. What then? What shall he do?

In the first place, he who considers the explanations which we gave of the origin of the general standard of any time must be struck by their temporariness. They certainly are not absolute and eternal. They do not pretend to be. The special need of a particular time, the power of reaction from something which has already been, the accidental presence of some powerful man,—all these concurring do not have any necessary coincidence with the eternal standards which are in the mind of God. The man who most accepts them as his present rule must certainly be ready to say, "They are not final. They may all disappear. Another age may come, must come, with different, it may be with better, loftier exactions."

There is freedom in a consciousness like that. He who is aware of the temporariness of the standards under which he lives, is at liberty to look above those standards. He may accept the unborn future,

as well as the already embodied present, for his home. He belongs not merely to the temporary which already is, and lies upon the surface, but also to the eternal, which is underneath now, and shall come forth visibly in some completer day.

Again, we must remember that our public standard is an average; and the very idea of average involves the absence of uniformity. To make an average you must have some parts lower and some other parts higher than the level at which you finally settle. The common public standards of any age, therefore, are the result of the upward and the downward forces pulling upon one another. As there are multitudes of degraded lives, lives always dragging downward the standard of their time, lives worse than their world; so there must be other lives better than their world, always drawing the standard upward against this base resistance. There must be men better than their time, or the time could not be as good as it is.

Let us remember this when the exceptional and shining lives seem to be wasted in a hopeless world. Some man who dares believe in the absolute truth, and to anticipate the judgment seat of God; some woman like a sunbeam in her purity and unworldliness,—what shall we say of them? They do not make the world to be like themselves; but there is not one of them whose life does not tell upon the world, to keep it from being completely what it would be if only the brutal and false and foul men and women had their way in it. Not one of their lives is wasted, though it may end upon a scaffold or a cross. Was the life of Jesus Christ wasted?

Here too is freedom. If in the very substance of this average itself are mingled purer forces; if these common standards, unaspiring as they appear, cannot be maintained unless there be some souls better than these standards, some uncontent, aspiring souls forever tugging at the current standards to draw them up, or at least to keep them from falling lower;— then why should I not be among these souls? Here there is surely room for aspiration. That the world may not be worse than it is, I will be better than my world.

And yet, once more, we always ought to remember, when we talk about the standards of the world, that we are of necessity talking very loosely. There are many worlds of many standards, all lying close together in this one, great, strange world of ours. The world is not one evenly kneaded uniformity of moral judgment. Close by the side of the little world in which your birth or business places you, there is, very likely, another world of different standards, of higher hopes and aspirations, into which world perhaps your life may be tranferred, by the very knowledge of which world's existence your life may be rebuked and purified. That other world may or may not be at once distinguishable, but it exists. And the very knowledge of that world gives freedom.

Here is the Christian Church, the never-dying testimony of the higher possibility in man. I know how ready we are to say that the Church shares the moral fortunes of the world. I know that there is truth in what we say, when we declare that in a base

age the Christian Church grows base. But all the time there is in man a deeper consciousness about the Church than that. The world hungers after, and is not satisfied unless it finds, a Church that is better than the times it lives in, a Church which is a power of God, forever protesting against the evil by which it is surrounded, forever insisting on the lofty moral standards which a base age calls hopeless.

> What is a holy Church, unless she awes
> The times down from their sins? Did Christ select
> Such amiable times to come and teach
> Love to, and mercy?

It is this ideal of the Church, always demanded, never lost wholly out of the hearts of men, sometimes beheld in more or less worthy realization in this poor, blundering, struggling, hoping Church of history, an ideal that is sure, men believe, to come and reveal itself, at last,—this it is which has stood for courage and freedom to multitudes of souls which, without her testimony, would have despaired of rising up above the standards of their age. For the sake of such souls everywhere, in all the ages which are yet to come, may Christ make His Church more and more what she ought to be!—may He make us who are in His Church more earnest to maintain her holiness!

Thus I have mentioned, one by one, some of the helps and provocations which offer themselves to every man who grows discontented with just accepting the standards of his time, to every man who wants to be better than his world. But I know full

well that I have not yet touched that which must be, sooner or later, the real strength and freedom of all aspiring men. These things of which I have spoken are but the opening of the prison doors. The real liberty, the real going-forth of the prisoner into freedom, can only come by an intensifying of personal life. That is the great, necessary thing. You may convince a man that the elements which make up the average standards of the world he lives in are local and temporary, and so have no right to hold him in submission. You may make him know that some men are all the time outgoing their generation, and that there is no reason why he should not be one of those men. You may point him to the worlds of higher life, the Church and all its meanings, which lie close beside his lower world all the time. And when you have done this there he sits! With his prison doors wide open, there he sits still! What can make him rise up upon his feet, and go forth in enterprising goodness to be better than his world? Nothing except a personal call, a personal responsibility, a sense of himself which makes him for the time forget his brethren and all their standards, and, just as if he were the one soul to whom such a call ever came, follow the voice which summons him wherever it may lead.

Is there a voice which can speak to the souls of men like that? "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," said Jesus Christ. The whole soul of the Christian Gospel is the enforcement of personal responsibility, of personal accountability. "You are God's child," it says to every soul.

"God loves you. He has given you your own life to live. He has prepared a judgment seat for you." And then there comes in that wonderful personal appropriation of redemption, which has filled all the history of Christianity and made countless souls feel that they had the right to say, as they looked upon the Cross of Calvary, "The Saviour who is dying there is my Saviour and is dying for me."

Here we get at the heart and soul of the whole matter. The power of Christ is thoroughly personal. He fills the single soul with its own inspirations, its own hopes, its own consciousness of responsibility and opportunity. He lifts a world or an age by lifting the individuals of which it is composed. Every power of Christ on the masses is but the consequence and aggregate of His power on individuals. Some forces might try to lift the world as a derrick lifts a rock, with a strong, stiff chain bound fast about the whole, so that no particle must lag behind, and no particle must outstrip another particle. But the power of Christ lifts the world, lifts society, as the spirit of flight lifts a flock of birds which fly together towards the sun. They rise together, but only because the same upward impulse tells on each. No doubt they fly the better because they fly in company; but any bird that can outstrip the others may do it. There is a certain general speed with which they fly; but no aspiring wing is bound to fly no faster. The general standard of speed, which is, no doubt, an inspiration to the slower, is no restraint upon the bravest and the strongest as he presses onward towards the sun.

Is not that what we want? I look at Christ Himself, and is not that just what I see? He felt His age and race about Him. He was a Jew in the time of Herod. And yet how freely He outwent His age! And why? Because He had to do directly and most intimately with God. He was the Son of God; and whatever may be the closeness with which the children of a family are bound to one another, the first relation of each is to the father of them all. That is what keeps the freedom and openness of family life. So Christ was free to outgo Judaism, because He knew Himself the child of God.

What Christ was, He tried to make His disciples be,—free by the direct personal relation of each to Himself and to the Father. There was, no doubt, a general average of life and character and knowledge in the twelve apostles; but John or Philip was perfectly at liberty to rise to higher knowledge of the Master, to enter deeper into His Spirit, to win completer consecration to His work. And the charter and assurance of their liberty was their Master's perpetual exhortation to them to follow Him, and to be perfect even as their Father in Heaven was perfect.

In that same injunction must be the charter and assurance of our liberty to reach forth after the highest, and to be better than our world. We live here in the midst of a certain average of faith. The men about us believe so much, and no more. Wonderful is the quickness and the positiveness with which the least belief beyond the average is hailed as superstition—over-belief, as the word seems to

mean. And yet the soul of every man is claimed by God's own revelations to that soul. The reservoirs of truth—God's world, God's Word, the human soul, the human history, the life and light of Christ,—they are open like the sky above the head of every man. Not unhelped by his brethren's faith, yet making every article of faith his own and following it out as God shall lead him by a special guidance; so every man must press forward into more and more belief.

My dear friends, be sure that you let no man, nor all the tone of all the age you live in — which is nothing but the colossal man of this especial time —dominate over your right and power of believing. The only hope of escape from the contagion and tyranny of unbelief lies in this claiming of the rights and privileges of the individual soul, the right and privilege of the individual soul to seek after truth and to hold immediate converse with God. It is not by going back to borrow the faith of the twelfth century, or of the second, that you can resist the unbelief of the nineteenth. Every true man, while he lives in his century, must live free from his century, must try, at least, to live the timeless and eternal life with Truth, and so to be open to his own uninterrupted, undistorted voice of God speaking directly to him. This is the only hope of escape either from narrow skepticism or from narrow superstition.

And as of faith, so too of life and conduct. How shall you and I, rowing up and down this little land-locked harbor of our class or party standards, gather strength and courage to run up our sails and

put out into the broad sea which lies beyond? We cannot do it unless some voice comes out of that sea, distinctly calling us to sail upon a course that leads to some special harbor which we are meant to reach, which the God who built our natures built us for. To undertake a life more self-sacrificing than your friends think it best to live, so that you can aid the poor; to take deliberately on your back the burden of some brother's life which men think worthless, and only fit just to be left to die; to declare, without uncharitable judgment of your fellow-men, that some well-recognized indulgence of society is hurtful to your purity or conscientiousness, and so you will have no part in it; to set yourself against some popular iniquity or in favor of some unpopular reform;—all of these are acts which can be done quietly, firmly, humbly, only as there comes to your soul a certain sense that you were made by God to do them; that, however it may be for other men, for you God's word is clear, and there is nothing for you to do but obey it. That was the conviction which came into the hearts of the first apostles when the fiery tongues of the Pentecost were still burning over their heads. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye!" said Peter and John to the Council in Jerusalem. They turned, you see, and appealed directly to their world, and said, "Behold we cannot live in your standards, for God is calling us." And even the hard-souled Council must have felt in its heart the power of the appeal.

Only in this truth,—that the escape from the

tyranny of local and temporary standards must lie in personal obedience to a call of God,—only here is found the safeguard of humility. I know full well that in what I have said there must have seemed to lurk the peril of the Pharisee. "We know him," I have almost seemed to hear you say; "we know the man who sets out to be better than his world. We know him and we hate him! We have had enough of his self-righteous ways. May we be saved from ever being men like him!" The only way in which you can be saved from being men like him, and yet not sink back into the slavery of average life, is by daring to believe that God meant something when He made you; and that the true humility and the true progress will be found in struggling with all your soul after that Divine design. That is the glorious liberty of the children of God.

And so this is our truth! You must go out of the merely temporary and local to meet the absolute and the eternal. To him who sits indoors it may often seem as if the sun were gone out and the winds no longer blew. To him who listens only to what is said by the men about him, or to the men of old time, it must often seem as if there were no absolute righteousness, no voice of God. Arise! Go forth under the open sky; God is still there, and the soul that really listens must hear His voice, and the soul that hears His voice must know that He is King.

I would not have you think that this truth is only for great men, with remarkable things to do in the world. It is for all men. It is for the schoolboy in

his school, tempted to swear or cheat because the other boys do. It is for the young man or woman in the boarding-house, crowded upon by the low atmosphere of gossip and frivolity which is hot and heavy there. It is for the shopkeeper shut in by the bad tricks and habits of his trade. It is for the politician, forever encountering the sneers of those who say that politics must be corrupt. It is for the men and women of society; for the students and the lawyers and the ministers; for the mechanics and the laborers; for every human creature who is tempted to slight his work and not to do and be his best. To all such comes the call, "Be better than your world! Break through the slavery of your class and time and set. Enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God."

And then, what more? Nothing but this: Of Christ the Saviour and the Master it is written that "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." And no wonder, then, that He said of Himself, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." That is the whole history. Christ makes us know that we *are*, and so makes us *be* the sons of God. Being God's sons, we strike directly for God and for His standards. So we are set at liberty to use, but not to be bound by, the standards of our class and time. In the great phrase of the apostle, we "live unto the Lord." This is the real redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. Into the very richest heart of that redemption may all of us enter, and there may we find liberty and life.

XV.

TRUTH PASSES THROUGH FAITH INTO POWER.

"Not being mixed with faith."—HEBREWS iv. 2.

THERE is always a pathetic interest, made up of sadness and hope together, in the sight of any good thing which fails of power and of its fullest life, because it is a fragment and does not meet the other part which is needed to complete the whole. A seed that lies upon the rock and finds no ground; an instrument that stands complete in all its mechanism but with no player's hand to call its music out; a man who might do brave and useful things under the summons of a friend's enthusiasm, but goes through life alone; a nature with fine and noble qualities that need the complement of other qualities, which the man lacks, to make a fruitful life; a country rich in certain elements of character, such as energy, hopefulness, self-confidence, but wanting just that profound conscientiousness, that scrupulous integrity, which should be the rudder to these broad and eager sails; a Church devout without thoughtfulness, or liberal without deep convictions, —where would the long list of illustrations end?

Everywhere the most pathetic sights are these in which possibility and failure meet. Indeed, herein lies the general pathos which belongs to the great human history as a whole, and to each man's single life. Not with the quiet satisfaction with which we look at inanimate nature or at the brutes, not with the sublime delight with which we think of God, can our thoughts rest on man, the meeting-place of such evident power and such no less evident deficiency.

The sadness does not disappear but rather increases as we lift up our eyes to the men who must be held to have succeeded best. From their height of success only a new range of unfulfilled possibility is opened. And the hope never wholly dies out, even for those who fail the worst. We follow them to their graves, almost looking to see them start from the dead and do the thing which they have always been upon the brink of doing. We dare to dream for them of another life when these powers, which the man has carried so long powerless, shall be mixed with the capacity or the motive which they have missed, and the life that never has been lived shall be at last begun.

One of these failures is described in the words of the text. The whole passage, as it stands in the Epistle, is this: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,"—the mixture of faith which truth needs in order that it may become profitable power. I think that no one reads the words and does not feel his notion of what faith is enlarge. Evidently it is something more than mere assent, something more than simple

acknowledgment that the truth is true. The essential relations between truth and the nature of man are evidently comprehended in their whole completeness. All that the nature of man might do to truth, all the welcome that it might extend, all the cordial and manifold relationships into which it might have entered with the word that was preached unto it,—all this is in the writer's mind. It is the failure of all this together that he laments. All this is summed up in the faith which the truth has not found. Faith, as he talks about it here, seems to be simply the full welcome which the human soul can give to anything with which it has essential and natural relationship. It will vary for everything according to that thing's nature, as the hand will shape itself differently according to the different shapes of the things it has to grasp. And faith is simply the soul's grasp, a larger or a smaller act according to the largeness or smallness of the object grasped; of one size for a fact, of another for a friend, of another for a principle, but always the soul's grasp, the entrance of the soul into its true and healthy relationship to the object which is offered to it.

It is in the fact that there are such essential relationships between man and the things which fill the world about him that the value and beauty of his existence lie. The application of any object to its faculty, the opening of the faculty to its object,—that is what makes the richness of all life. In the open faculty the object finds its true mixture, and its higher life begins. You hold a bit of sweet food

to the eye and it finds no welcome there. It is not "mixed with faith." Only when it touches the tongue it opens its possibilities, and becomes, first, pleasure, and then, nourishment. You play sweet music to the taste, and the taste cannot hear it. It makes no entrance. It is "not mixed with faith." For faith is another word for welcome,—the cordial acceptance of any presence into the inmost chambers of our human nature where that particular presence has a right to go.

How easy it is to carry this up from the physical structure to much higher things! You bring a true, rich friend, and set him before a sordid man, a man of selfish ambitions, and how powerless he is! He makes no entrance. He is "not mixed with faith." You take a great motive, one that has rung like a bugle in the ears of the noblest men that have ever lived, and you make it sound in the ears of a dull boy who has no ambition to be noble, and why is it that it falls dead? Because it is "not mixed with faith." It finds no answering manhood in this boy with which it may unite and make a noble man. Truth and a soul that is ready for truth meet like the fuel and the flame. They know each other. It is like the Lord's Parable of the Sower. The good seed finds the ground ready, and out of their quick union comes the plant that by and by crowns itself with the flower. The seed upon the stony ground comes to nothing, because it is "not mixed with faith."

At the bottom of our whole conception of what faith is, must lie its personality. There are some

things which I can have no faith in, while you may take them into your very heart of hearts. There are other things which I could not live without, but to which you give no welcome. One loves to think of the quick combinations that are going on all around us. Everywhere truths, objects, characters, are falling into men's lives, and, finding faith there, are entering on their own higher lives as convictions, powers, and inspirations. In one man one truth finds its waiting faith, and in another man another. It is the sublime prerogative of God's Fatherhood that He alone can ask for faith in every man. Only He can stand and look over the worldful of His children, and cry to every one, "My son, give me thy heart," and know that in every heart there ought to be a welcome for Him to its very inmost chambers.

As soon as we understand what the faith is which any object or truth must find and mix itself with before it can put on its fullest life and power, then, I think, we are impressed with this,—that men are always making attempts which never can succeed to give to objects and truths a value which in themselves they never can possess, which can only come to them as they are taken home by faith into the characters of men. We hear men talk about the progress of our country, and by and by we find that they mean the increase of its wealth, the development of its resources, the opening of its communications, the growth of its commerce. These do not make a country great; they are powerless until they are mixed with faith, until they give themselves to

the reinforcement of the human qualities of which any real national life, like any real personal life, is made, and make the nation more generous, more upright, and more free. They may do that. It is in the power of a nation, as of a man, to grow greater by every added dollar of its wealth; but a dollar is powerless until it mixes itself with faith and passes into character.

And so of far more spiritual things than dollars. You say, "How headlong my boy is! Let me give him a wise friend, and so he shall get wisdom." You say, "Here is my brother who has been frivolous. Behold, a blessed sorrow is gathering about him, and out of the darkness he will come with a sober heart." You say, "This man is coarse and brutish; let me set him among fine things, and he will become delicate and gentle." You say, "This selfish creature has not cared for his country in what seemed her soft and easy days, but let the storm come, let the war burst out, or the critical election, big with disgrace or honor, rise up like a sudden rock out of the calm sea, and patriotism will gather at his heart, and set his brain to lofty thoughts, and strengthen his arm for heroic deeds." Forever the same anticipations from mere circumstances! the same trust in mere emergencies, in facts, events, and things; and forever the same disappointment! forever the same reiterated answer from all experience, like the perpetually repeated answer that the moaning rocks give to the querulous tide, which is always creeping back to hear it once again,—the answer that no crisis, no event, no fact,

no person, is of real value to the soul of any man, unless it really gets into that soul, compels or wins its welcome, and passes, by the mixture of faith, into character. So, and so only, does a wise friend make your boy wise, or sorrow make your brother noble, or fine and gentle circumstances make the coarse man fine, or the need of his country make the selfish man a patriot.

Now, all this is peculiarly true with reference to religion. Think how it runs through the Bible. Remember the course of the sacred History which is a perpetual parable of that other no less sacred history which is in the life of every religious man. The story of the Bible is simply the record of God, the great eternal Circumstance, the vast Surrounding that always encompasses the life of man; constantly offering Himself to that life and testing its capacity to receive Him. At the beginning comes the mysterious story of Genesis. The Creator walks with the new Humanity among the trees of the New Garden. But the Humanity, as yet unripened by experience, untrained by suffering, unenlightened by the discovery of its own essential feebleness, self-confident and superficial, cannot take the Divine society into its deepest heart. Adam and Eve—the young and untrained Earth and Life—take God into the society of their happiness, but they do not claim Him in the inmost chambers, into the government of their wills and the consolation of their sorrow.

At the other end of the Bible is the New Jerusalem, and there what have we? Man rich in all the

fearful and beautiful experience of life; humanity with all its history of grief and comfort, of sin and redemption; humanity mellowed, softened, humbled, deepened by all the experience of the long, slow day in which the ages of human history have been the creeping hours. And lo! in this beaten and ripened humanity the doors are all wide open. Even into the deepest chambers enters the ever-present God, and finds in each chamber a new faith with which He mixes Himself and becomes the soul's life. "The Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be in their foreheads." Between the two ends of the Bible, there is the story of God's perpetual offer of Himself to the soul of man, and of His entrance into it just so far as He finds faith to welcome Him. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Nicodemus, John the disciple, Paul,—each marks some access of the Divine Presence to our human life. And each bears witness how impossible it is even for God to enter into a humanity that has not faith, to enter any humanity farther than that humanity has faith to take His blessed Presence in.

There is indeed another truth which always mingles with this, and softens the harshness which would be in it if it stood alone. That other truth is that every approach of God to man has a true tendency to create the faith, without which the approach can never become a real entrance. As the face of your unforgotten friend, coming towards you, reclaims you for himself, and has a true power

to make you give that welcome to his love which still, at the last, nothing but your own willing love can give, and without which he, love you as warmly as he may, cannot enter; so the first truth of religion always must be that there is such an essential and original belonging between God and man, that as God comes to man He makes, as far as any power outside man's own will can make, the faith which is to be His welcome. If this were not truth, life would be very dark and hope would be a mockery.

Yet, still the truth remains that only into faith, only into a fitness and receptivity of soul, can even God come with His blessed Presence. And if it is true of God, it is true certainly of every truth of God, and of all the forms of sacred influence which His Presence takes. They cannot enter the real life of a man until they are "mixed with faith." Just think how this convicts of superficialness a very large part of our labor and expectation for the extension of religion and the benefit of man. We put confidence in our organizations. "Let us plant our church in this remote village," we say. "Let our beloved services be heard among those unfamiliar scenes. Let our ministry be known in the far West, and so men shall be saved." We have not too much confidence, but the wrong kind of confidence, in the objective truth: "Let this, which I know is verity, come to this bad man's life, and he must turn."

There is all about us this faith in the efficacy of ideas over character. The orthodox man believes that if you could silence all dissent from the old

venerated creed, the world would shine with holiness. The unbeliever thinks that if you could tear the old creeds out of the belief of men, the crushed, creed-ridden heart of man would spring up and enthusiastically claim its privilege of goodness. How like it all sounds to the cry which we hear in the Parable, coming forth from the still unenlightened ruin of a wasted life: "Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Ideas are mighty. There is no real strength in the world that has not an idea at its heart. To declare true ideas, to speak the truth to men, is the noblest work that any man can covet or try to do. To attempt to gain power over men which shall not be really the power of an idea is poor, ignoble work. But yet it is none the less certain that no man does really tell the truth to other men, who does not always go about remembering that truth is not profitable till it is mixed with faith, that the final power of acceptance or rejection lies in the soul. It is the forgetfulness of this which has made the useless teachers of every kind—the teachers from whom the scholars have gone away unfed, the faithful but fruitless ministers, the dreary books, the disappointed, unsuccessful reformers.

I have been talking thus far as if a truth which did not meet with faith simply remained inoperative. "The word preached did not profit them," writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "not being mixed with faith." But we must go farther than this. The mind of man is far too delicate and sensitive for anything unappropriated, and not made

a part of itself, to lie in it without doing it harm. Everything that is there must enter into some relation with the humanity which holds it; and if the relation be not one of fellowship and help, it will certainly be hostile and injurious. How universal is this necessity! The person whom a man has studied and understood, but has not learned to sympathize with and love, becomes an irritation,—all the more irritating as his life is pressed more closely on the unsympathetic and unloving heart. His motives are distorted. His excellencies excite jealousy, instead of admiration. His failings are exaggerated, and make the observer glad instead of sorry.

And so it is with books. The book which you have studied, but whose heart you have not taken into your heart, makes you not a wise man but a pedant. And so it is with institutions. The government under which you live, but with whose ideas you are not in loyal sympathy, chafes and worries you, and makes you often all the more rebellious in your heart, the more punctiliously obedient you are in outward action. And so, especially, it is in all that pertains to religion. What is the root and source of bigotry, and of that which goes with bigotry,—partisanship,—the desire that a belief—whether the belief be true or false—should prosper and prevail, not because it is true, but because it is ours?

Is not the real reason of these morbid substitutes for healthy belief always this—that truth has been received, but not "mixed with faith," not deeply

taken into the very nature of the man who has received it? Take any truth, the truth for instance of the Lord's Incarnation. Let it be simply a proved fact to a man, and how easily he comes to hate or to pity the men who do not hold it, how ready he is to seek out and magnify the shades of difference in the statements which men make of it who hold the great truth along with him! But let that same truth be "mixed with faith," let it enter into those depths of a man's nature where it is capable of going, let it awaken in him the deep, dear sense of the unutterable Love of God, let it reveal to him his human dignity, his human responsibility, his human need, and then how impossible it will be for him to be a bigot! How all men, believers and unbelievers alike, will be seen by him within the glory of his great truth! How he will pity the men who do not know it! How he will welcome and rejoice in any half-knowledge of it, any guess that he sees men making at it, though it be very blind and crude! How he will have fellowship with any man who really does believe it, though the form in which that man has conceived and stated it may be different from his own! It is possible for us to believe the same everlasting truths which the bigots and the persecutors believed, and yet escape their bigotry and intolerance. But we must do it, not by believing less deeply, but by believing more deeply than they did. The path to charity lies not away from faith, but deep on into the very heart of faith; for only there true, reasonable, permanent charity abides.

How heavily all this pressed upon the heart of Jesus Christ! He sat with His disciples at the quiet Passover, and His thoughts ran back over all the multitudes to whom His words had come, and in whom they had found no faith. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," He said, "they had not had sin." He looked the Pharisees in the face as if He pitied them so while He rebuked them that He would almost, if He could, have plucked away again the truth which He had taught them. "If ye were blind," He cried, "ye should have no sin." How He must look at some of us! The sorrow with which He wept over Jerusalem must be forever newly wakened in His heart. He sees men believing all wrong, because they do not believe enough. He sees us taking with one part of our nature what was meant for the whole, taking with our wills what our affections ought to take, taking with slavish fear what we ought to embrace with glowing love. Can we not almost hear Him say, as if He pitied us for the very richness of the truth which He has offered us, the very richness with which He has offered us Himself, the old sad words, "How is it that ye have no faith?"

The whole of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ is full of emphasis laid on the value of the soul and its personal life. Two words describe the work that He is always declaring that He has come to do for men—revelation and regeneration,—the opening of divine truth and power to men, and the making of men fit for the divine truth and power; truth for men and men for the truth. He says to Nathaniel,

"Thou shalt see greater things than these"; He says to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again"; and He declares that He Himself is the force by which both shall be accomplished when He cries in the Temple, "I am come a Light into the world, that he that believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

As we read the story of the men who have tried to help the world, we see the divine supremacy of Christ in the proportion which these two offers, these two promises,—revelation and regeneration,—always held to one another in His mind and teaching. There have been many teachers whose one idea was revelation, and their truth has passed away and left men unlifted, unaroused. There have been other teachers whose one idea was regeneration, the making of new men; but they brought no truth which could at once feed and fasten the character which they tried to inspire. Jesus Christ comes with both. And yet always the new manhood is the great, supreme thing. Revelation always demands regeneration, and then its whole work is to complete it and to make it permanent.

Ah, my dear friends, we have not caught at all the real heart of the Saviour unless we hear perpetually in everything He does and says the beating of that absorbing sense of the infinite importance of the soul and its condition. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life": those calm and philosophic words of Solomon turn in the soul of Christ into an eager, vivid, passionate anxiety over the spiritual readiness of the men before whom He stood with His untold blessings,—"Let your

loins be girt about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." Truth cannot feed the soul, nor power strengthen it, nor love soften it, nor mercy save it, unless the soul is ready to welcome it and "mix it with faith."

It is good for us, I think, to believe that many and many a man to whom the doctrines of Christianity are very dark, does yet catch from the whole aspect of Christ, and from all He says, this great and deep conviction of the value of the soul, and of the infinite importance that it should be kept pure and true and ready. That is the beginning of the healthiest process of the new life. To the soul so guarded and so open all truth shall come. For before the faith which receives truth and turns it into power, there must come the other faith which knows that the soul is made for truth and waits expectant of its coming. And when this deepest and first faith is really present, the other sooner or later cannot fail to come.

Think for a few moments of the rich light that this truth on which we have been dwelling—the truth of the dependence of everything upon the central soul of man and its condition—throws upon two or three subjects which are often before our minds. Just see how vast a future it opens to humanity. We think sometimes that we have come in sight of the end of progress, that we live where we can at least foresee an exhausted world. Our ships have sailed the sphere around. Our curiosity

has searched to the roots of the mountains and swept the bottoms of the seas. Men have played every rôle before us which imagination and ambition could suggest. What can there be before the ages which are to come when we are gone but endless reiteration of old things? Is not the interest of life almost used up? "But no!" this truth declares; "the interest of life is not in the things that happen, but in the men who see." If man be capable of perpetual renewal by ever-increasing faith, then to the ever-new man the old world shall be forever new. It will not need strange things. The things that we call common, the things that have been long familiar, the things which have been, and have been done, over and over since the world began, will shine forever with new light. There must be a limit to the wonders that this world has to show, the stories that it has to tell; but the relations which may exist between this world and the soul of man ever growing in receptive faith are practically without limit; and so the everlasting interest of life, the perpetual progress of humanity, are sure.

Consider also what a light this throws upon the life which many a fellow-man is living now close by our side. How much richer than we can begin to know the world must be to our brother who has a faith which we have not. According to our faith, so is the world to each of us. I dare to give my pity to some man who seems to me to live a meagre life. How few things happen in his days! How little light there is in his dark house! How dull the voices are that break his silence! But who am

I that I should give him pity? Let me know that it is not what he *has* but what he *is* that makes the poverty or richness of his life. It may well be that, while I pity him, his deeper faith is seeing visions and hearing music in familiar things of which I have no dream. The world is more to every true, unselfish man when he knows that his limited perception is no measure of its wealth, but that the deeper souls are all the time finding it rich beyond all that he has imagined.

And yet again, think of the same truth as it gives us some light upon the everlasting life, the life beyond the grave. The Revelation tells us of golden streets and gates of pearl. It tells us also of beings who shall walk in them with a precious and mystic name written on their foreheads. Let us be sure that the new name in the forehead is what makes the reality of Heaven far more than the gold under the feet. The new circumstances shall be much, but the new man shall be more! Only by knowing that can we be truly getting ready for Heaven here. We can do nothing now to build the streets and gates, but by God's grace we can do much, very much, now, to begin to become the men and women to whom Heaven shall one day be possible. Then Heaven, when it comes, will not be strange. Only a deepening of the faith, by which we sought it, shall receive and absorb and grow in and by its richness forever and forever.

Have you faith, my friends? Ask yourselves in the sight of God, and pray to Him to give it to you if you have it not, and pray to Him to increase it if

you have it, for, just as far as you have it, everything is yours,—this world and its richness, the world eternal with its promises, Christ Jesus with His measureless culture and His satisfying Love!

May we all grow in Faith!

XVI.

THE MYSTERY OF MAN.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."—I CORINTHIANS ii. 11.

THIS has always seemed to me to be one of the greatest and most powerful of arguments. It shows the greatness of the man who made it and whose mind it satisfied. For the quality of men is shown not so much by the opinions which they hold as by the grounds upon which they hold them, by the arguments upon which those opinions rest in their minds. Men may hold the greatest of truths in a feeble way and upon the most unsubstantial evidence. Men may believe, for instance, in the Being of God because they have been told that it is true, or because they want to believe it. On the other hand, men may believe the simplest and commonest of truths on the most solemn and majestic grounds. Men may believe in the duty of neatness, or of charity, on considerations drawn from the nature of God and of the universe. So it seems that men's greatness is decided not by the opinions which they hold, but by the kind of evidence on which, and by the kind of spirit in which, they hold them.

The subject of which St. Paul is speaking is an old one. The belief which he is asserting is one which many men have held,—nay, really one which all men hold who think of it at all. It is the mystery of God, the incomprehensibleness by man of the Almighty. That is no new thought. Every man who has thought of God has had it, but men have held it in a multitude of little ways. It has seemed to many of them to be God wilfully hiding Himself from His children, eluding them and mocking them, a bewildering, exasperating truth. But to St. Paul it seems to rest upon the strongest and deepest necessities of the very nature of God and man, and evidently it brings him not trouble, but peace and strength.

What is St. Paul's argument? None but God can know God, he declares. It is only by His revelations of Himself to us, only by His entrance into us in one way or another, only by His Spirit imparted to us, that we can come to any understanding of what He is and how He works. "Yes," he says, "this is true of every nature. It must be true. All beings in their essential life are mysteries. Only by sharing their nature can any one know them. Beings of another kind can watch them, can see how they work, can catch from their character some inferences about their nature, but no one can know them but themselves. The things of any being only the spirit of that being knows." His words suggest how such a truth runs through the whole creation, how every order of brute life must have some mutual sympathy and understanding among its members,

which no brute outside that order can possibly share.

But where the eye of St. Paul's argument specially fastens itself is upon man. "Look," he says, "what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man which is in him? Look," he says, "man is a mystery. Humanity stands alone, and it is only by being man that any one can know what manhood is. Other orders of being may stand by and gaze,—may see what man does, and from his doings guess at what man is, but in himself is still locked up his mystery. No brute, no angel can unravel it. It is man's own, locked up in his own human consciousness. And then," so runs the argument, "if this be so, if other beings cannot read us, what wonder if we cannot read that Being which is over us! 'No man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of man which is in him. Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' " The mystery of man justifying and illustrating to him the mystery of God—that is St. Paul's argument.

Let us look at this illustration of St. Paul and see if it will not throw some light for us upon the thought of God,—see if it will not help us to understand something of the necessary mysteriousness of His life, and also of how we may gradually enter into that mystery and come to know more and more of Him. The mystery of man as it illustrates the mystery of God—that is our subject.

By the mystery of man, then, in the first place, we may mean either a Race Mystery or a Personal Mystery. We may be thinking either of that gulf

which separates human life from every other kind of life, and binds all men together into a sympathy which no being who is not man can enter; or our thoughts may be upon the way in which each individual man carries about a secret life which no other man can comprehend. Of this last there is the most to say, but let us turn first to the other.

Think of the race mystery of humanity. Side by side with all the lower races, all the brutes, through many generations, there has lived this humanity, having to do with them, but, as we often must have felt, knowing almost nothing about them, not understanding in the least their lower and imperfect lives. Emerson says in his essay on History: "I hold our actual knowledge very cheap. Hear the rats in the wall, see the lizard on the fence, the fungus under foot, the lichen on the log. What do I know sympathetically, morally, of either of these worlds of life? As long as the Caucasian man, perhaps longer, these creatures have kept their counsel beside him, and there is no record of any word or sign that has passed from one to the other."

And then, when we turn the question the other way, when we ask not what we know of them, but what they know of us, we feel still more the break that lies between us. We have certain reasoning powers by which we may at least guess at something of what is going on in the dull lives of the lower animals; we may see something in them which we call "instinct," and try to define it, but the brute that looks at man—what can he see? Only certain habits and very dimly certain dispositions. He

knows how you will act in certain circumstances, and he has a dim sense that you care for him or that you hate him. He treats you as he treats fire, which he has learned will burn him if he walks into it, and for which he has an affection because it keeps him warm. There is no understanding in him of your life. He does not know you. He cannot know you unless he be man.

Now fancy that a brute should be endowed with intelligence enough to think about his relations to this higher race. Then suppose that he entirely ignores an incapacity upon his part to comprehend humanity. He thinks that he is fully equal to the task. He will allow no mystery of human life. Starting from himself he claims to understand it all. What is the result? Is it not merely that his man becomes to him only a more perfect brute? He pictures to himself no qualities outside of the little range of his own life. He leaves no margin for undiscovered qualities. He thinks he is entirely a fit judge and critic of this order of beings above his own. What shall we say? Has not the dog or the horse gone all wrong when he has lost sight of the mystery that separates another kind of life from his? Has he not made man a mere creature of his own crude fancy? Is he not robbing his life of that which it ought to look up to and respect and obey? And may not man, turning to rebuke the brute's rash and crude thinking, claim the dignity of his own separate, peculiar life? "Be still, and know that I am Man. You cannot judge me. You cannot understand me. My will and my kindliness you can

discover from my action; it is your place to take the one with obedience and the other with gratitude, but never to forget the vast gulf that separates your life from mine. You cannot tell what plan directs the will, what wisdom governs the kindliness. Let there be a reverent acknowledgment of a larger life that must be past the comprehension of every brute, unless some day that comes which never has come yet, and some brute crosses the line that separates the races and becomes a man."

Thus upon his distinctive manhood man stands and claims his mystery. "No other race can understand me. No other being can judge me. 'Who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?'" And is there, then, any figure, any analogy here, that throws light upon something that is higher? St. Paul follows it on instantly: "Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." Shall we think of St. Paul speaking these words as if he were the loyal champion of God indicating his Master's rights against the captious criticism of the men about him? or shall we think of it as part of the word of God, and so seem to hear God Himself rebuking the ignorance that presumes to judge Him?

From whatever lips they come, the words are an assertion that there is in God the same mystery of nature that there is in man; that for any being of another order than the highest there is the limitation which belongs to every lower being watching and studying a higher. Just as the brute learned of man how he would act under certain circumstances

and that he was subject to certain emotions; just as he learned man's habits and his friendliness, but went all wrong the moment that he thought he had comprehended all his nature; so man may learn much of what God will do, and may gather a rich and certain knowledge of God's love. But the instant that he claims to understand God, so that he can judge of Him and criticise His actions, he is all wrong. He is not understanding the Eternal God; he is merely imagining a God. He is not rising to the conception of the Almighty, he is dragging the Almighty down to his conception. "Be still, and know that I am God";—that is the rebuke that comes pealing down upon him in some disappointment and confusion of his presumptuous plans. And by and by, if he is wise and teachable, if he hears the rebuke, if he learns to follow God's will and rest upon His love, reverently knowing that he cannot comprehend His nature, he is saved from the captious folly of criticising God, and enters on a higher life of peace.

But I hasten now to say that while all this is true, it does not fully or satisfactorily represent the relation between God and Man. We are not brutes before Him; we are His children. While we are not Divine, and so are of a different nature from Him, yet we are capable of Divinity, and so are really one with Him in nature. Here, then, there is something needed to complete our truth; and that, I think, we shall find if we turn from the Race Mystery to what I called the Personal Mystery of Human Life.

Besides that gulf which separates the human life from every other order of existence, there is an envelope of mystery and separateness about every single life. This is a fact of which we think much oftener than of the other. It is continually forced upon us. The very fact that we have so much in common with the person by our side, reminds us constantly how much there is in each of us that there is not in the other; how, while we both belong to the same race, each has his own personal distinctness which the other cannot invade. You stand with some friend of yours before a mighty picture or before Niagara. Each of you is drinking in the sight, and these two natures are both being filled with it. Both are susceptible to it, for both are human natures, and humanity is made to drink in and appropriate sublimity and beauty. You both stand in silence till, by and by, you both speak. Each says his own word, which utters his own emotion, his own thought; and then you see how, while each has drunk in the same majesty, each has taken it into a nature distinct and unintelligible to the other.

Or how is it when you read the stories of the brightest or the blackest of mankind? We read of the martyrs, of men and women who would suffer anything rather than deny their faith, of missionaries who would go half round the globe to save a soul; and then we turn and read the story of the wretched suicide who was ready to blow up a shipful of unsuspecting passengers for a few miserable dollars: are they not both of them of our race? In the brightness of the one and in the blackness of the

other, is there not something that makes us say at once, "Both these are human"?

But, personally, can we know either of them? Can we understand them? In our moderate, comfortable life, moving along in the middle range of feeling, never exalted into any great enthusiastic goodness and never sinking into any hideous vice, we cannot picture to ourselves how a man can put everything aside and walk up to the stake for a principle, and calmly see the fire lighted; nor how another man, off at the very opposite pole of humanity, can contemplate with perfect coolness the horrible destruction of hundreds of his fellow-creatures for a little money. Both of these beings are wrapped in their own personal mystery. Around the one burns the fire of his glorious self-devotion. Around the other rolls the black stream of his hideous selfishness. You must be the martyr or the monster yourself, before you can know what it is to be either of them.

So it is always. When an unselfish man tries to tell another what the joy is which he finds in charity; when the religious man wants to describe the blessedness of Christ to some indifferent friend; what is it that stops the tongues that are ready to speak out to this other life? Or even where we cannot put our finger upon any single interest which is strong in one and not in the other, and which accounts for the imperfect sympathy, still there is this ultimate fact of personality. Around every human being, as around every atom, there is a wrapping of separateness; so that however closely they touch each other

they never really mingle. It is a strange, impressive idea that, closely as men have crowded each other all these ages, no man ever knew perfectly any manhood but his own. No man ever knew his nearest friend so well but that it would be an utter amazement to him if he were turned into that friend for an hour. Come as close to your friend as you will, learn as much as you will of how your natures are alike, you will surely come at last to some locked door, the very citadel of his personality, which you cannot enter, simply because you are not he. Damon and Pythias divide at last. David has some things which not even Jonathan can know. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him?"

About this personal mystery, the reserve of every man's life,—we notice that it is not deliberate or wilful. As soon as it becomes that, it is churlish and conceited. It is not something which a man determines on. To attempt to set up a line within which no one shall come, the nearest limit by which any man shall approach our life,—that is folly and excites only derision and dislike. Men soon look over our fence and see that there is nothing in that barren pasture which we have fenced with so much care to make believe that we have a fine estate.

But the true nature needs no fences. It is anxious to admit its brethren just as far as they can come. It shuts no man out by any wilfulness. Only at last there comes a door which no other man's feet can possibly pass. There are thoughts which you can think and feelings which you, and you alone, can

feel, shapes of the universal human thoughts and feelings which are as truly your own as your presentation of the universal human face belongs to you and no other man in all the world, simply because you are you, and no other man is you anywhere. "If I were you, I would do so and so," we lightly say to one another; but no man can know what he would do if he were his brother. He cannot tell what new forms of motive and impulse he would find in that sacred, secret room of his brother's personality, where his feet have never trodden, and can never tread.

But just because this personal mystery is not wilful but necessary, depending on the relations which exist between two characters, therefore its limit is not fixed. A nature does not set itself one limit for all comers. Different people can come to different depths in this life of yours, which still keeps its inmost secret to itself. One man stops at the outermost gate, and knows nothing about you but your most superficial habits, — the way you walk, the street you walk in, and the shops at which you trade. Another man, with the key of mutual sympathy and understanding, opens door after door, explores the spiritual meaning of the things that you do, enters your heart and reads your motives. Now this key of mutual sympathy and understanding is what we call your "spirit." He who has the spirit as well as the form of your actions, he who understands your spirit as well as your habits, he may enter in to the depths of your life. It is conceivable that two human beings should have so perfectly

each other's spirit that they should perfectly comprehend each other's nature, and be like one heart, one being. That is conceivable, but it is not realized. Always there is some stoppage short of the complete penetration of one nature by another; and so personality keeps its last, inmost mystery unexplored.

But just as soon and just as far as one man has another's spirit, he may enter freely into that other's life. Nothing will hinder him. It is wonderful how the most jealously guarded doors fly open the moment that a newcomer brings that key. There is wilful, proud reserve enough; but the largest reason why men keep themselves back from one another is that each does not believe that the other has his spirit; that is, that the other's conceptions and intentions of life are the same as his. The minute he finds that the other has, he gives himself to that man ungrudgingly. Look at two new men meeting; see how they sit like two animals and watch each other. See how each takes for granted that the other is only in most superficial sympathy with him, and so they talk about most superficial things. But see, if they have really the same spirit, if the meanings of life, bright or sombre, are the same to them, how, as they find it out, each inevitably and unhesitatingly takes the other in; and, blending like two sunbeams or two clouds, they penetrate each other's inmost nature.

This fact seems to me to give a simple and attractive idea of a man's progress in the knowledge of men better and wiser than himself. As his spirit expands and purifies, purer and larger people are

always becoming intelligible to him. As he grows a better man, he sweeps up to where higher and higher orders of his fellow-men are sitting, and he understands them there. "Now I know what he means," he says of some one who has seemed to him to talk foolishness and nonsense, but whose spiritual key he has now found in his own growing spiritual life.

It is just as true when we sweep downward. One of the most terrible things about a sinking soul must be the way in which lower and lower beings become intelligible to it. It comes to understand vileness which was once wholly incomprehensible. As we go up or go down with every new spirit that we gain, some new nature opens its mystery and shows its meaning to us.

And now, with these thoughts of the mystery of humanity clearly before us, let us turn suddenly and try to realize that, as St. Paul suggests, all this is equally true about the mystery of God. My brother man hides his inner life from me, not because he wants to, but because he cannot help it. That same is true of God. He does not set me—His child, His servant—to seek after that which He is all the time holding off out of any chance of my finding it. He does not say, "Know me," and then draw the clouds about His face and sit mocking me behind them as I seek and seek for Him in vain. His mystery is necessary. It is because He is God that He cannot make Himself plain to me at once. Let me know this fully, and then the mystery that envelops the Divine things no more exasperates or depresses me than does the mystery of my best

friend, and I am saved from all the petty complaining which talks as if God had done me wrong by not turning out all the depths of His life to me at once.

And again, in the mystery of humanity different people come nearer to or farther from the secret of a life, according as they have more or less of that life's spirit. That, too, is true of the mystery of Divinity. Not by any mere favoritism, not by a fond and foolish arbitrary choice, does God let a few favored children into secrets about Himself which He hides from the rest. The child who has the Father's Spirit knows the Father.

And then again, in the mystery of humanity, however reluctant a man seems, he will—we may almost say he must — unfold himself to any one who really has his spirit. So (and when we know this, what cloud can possibly come between us and Him?) God always will give—we may almost venture to say God always must give—the knowledge of Himself to every man as fast and as far as that man, having His Spirit, is able to receive Him.

Apply these truths about God's mystery to the two great revelations which He has given us of Himself in the Bible and in Christ. Would it not help us very much about the Bible if we could know, and never could forget, that the darkness which often meets us there is not wilful but necessary? It is not a book of puzzles where God has set Himself to bewilder us with contradictory accounts and insoluble moral problems. Everywhere, in History and Psalm and Prophecy and Gospel, He has told us all that was tellable to us about Himself. And into this

Bible one man will penetrate deeper than another, not by any other power than simply by having more of the Spirit of the God whom it reveals. And this Bible will enlarge its utterances to every soul just as that soul enters more and more perfectly into the meaning and intention of it all,—into that love for holiness and truth which is the Spirit of God from which it came. These are the golden laws, the first pregnant axioms of true and spiritual Bible reading.

Apply the same to Christ. He is no wilful mystery. If He who walked in the broad daylight did not shine through and through, transparent to the proud Pharisees and carnal Sadducees; and if He now eludes us when we attempt to follow Him into His deepest depths; it is not that He will not, but that He cannot, show us all. Oh, it makes a vast difference to us, in looking at Him who is so dear to us, whether we think of Him as One who is holding back what He might tell us, or as One who is struggling to utter Himself to those who are too far from Him to understand Him perfectly. Does the cloud come out from the sun or up from the earth?

Yes; Christ shows us all of God that He can show. And He is different to different men,—a hard, cold, barren study to one, the mere agent of a mechanical salvation to another, the very Lord of the Heart, the Life of Life, to another, according as each has more or less of His Spirit. And He will give Himself to men, open deeper and deeper visions of His life, just as fast as they can take Him in. What a buoyant, hopeful Christian life it makes if

one believes all that! How the souls who, gathering more and more of Christ's Spirit, are always coming nearer to Christ, seem like the long procession that David saw moving along across the valleys and the hills from the far ends of the country, and always getting nearer to the Temple at Jerusalem till at last they entered into its very gates. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

If we should change for a moment our thought of Christ, we might consider Him not as the Revealer of God, but as the Man, struggling after the comprehension of His Father just as all his brother men are doing. He is both. He is the Revealer of God, and the struggling Son of Man. And yet not "struggling"; for, when we think of Christ's humanity, we feel that we have reached that which we said a little while ago was conceivable, but never had been perfectly realized between two human lives—so absolute a possession by one of the spirit of the other that there is no break or hindrance in the perfect knowledge. Jesus Christ had perfectly God's Spirit. With that key He opened doors before which men had always waited hopeless, and walked through chambers of the Divine Mystery where no human feet before had ever trodden. He knew what was the divine meaning of pain, the divine hate of sin, the divine ideal of man. He had perfectly God's Spirit, and so He knew the things of God; and, taking us into His life, He makes us sharers of His Spirit and of His knowledge. As He said Himself, "No man knoweth the Son but the

Father, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

As I look back over the ground where we have walked, and then look round upon our life, I seem to see the argument of St. Paul bursting forth everywhere, out of every association which man has with his fellow-men. All these intimacies which we have with one another become prophetic of a higher intimacy, declare its possibility, and suggest its limitations and its laws. As we go about, knowing one another, touching each other's life in all the satisfying and stimulating intercourses of mind and heart, there is a voice which comes out of the whole and says to us: "So you might know God. Do not be perfectly satisfied with any knowledge, any friendship, short of His."

But out of these same associations which we have with one another come these other voices: "Behold! your brother is a mystery to you. Do not then think or wish to find God unmysterious. Behold! he who has most of your brother's spirit knows him best. Do not complain, then, if one who has more of God's Spirit than you have, who is humbler, truer, purer, manlier than you are, knows Him as you do not, sees Him as you fail to see Him. But behold! as soon as you are fit to know your brother, he cannot help showing himself to you. By that right of fitness you enter in and comprehend him. Be ambitious, then. As fast as you can contain more knowledge of God, it shall be given to you. The 'pure in heart' shall certainly

'see God.' As impossible as it is for the impure to see Him, so impossible is it for the pure not to see Him."

Whatever gives us more of God's Spirit makes a new knowledge of Him possible. Here is the meeting ground of goodness and knowledge. When we are in heaven and revelling in the absolute, unhindered vision of Divinity, seeing God face to face, we shall look back to some experience of this life,—perhaps paltry, perhaps painful,—some time when God broke our pride and won our hearts and gave us His Spirit,—and we shall see that in that experience was really the opening of the mystery of God for us, the beginning of the endless knowledge of eternity. Oh, if we really understood that to know God is the only true end of life, we should be looking into every experience to see if He were not trying there to give us a little more of His Spirit, and so to make possible a little deeper revelation of Himself.

XVII.

THE ENDLESS CONFLICT.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—GENESIS iii. 15.

THE story of how the world began to sin must always have profoundest interest for every man, who, while he cannot remember the beginning of his own sinning, has always present with him the thought of what a dreadful difference sin has made in his own life. In the story of Genesis, this verse which I have read stands in a most critical and touching place. Sin has come. Disobedience is in the world. Now, what will it lead to? What sort of future now is possible? A hush and pause almost seem to fall upon the history, as when some bold, strong voice has spoken out a word, and all the world seems listening to hear in what form the echo will come back from the hillside. Adam and Eve have sinned. The man and woman are no longer righteousness and purity. Disobedience has come in. And as they stand, awestruck and anxious, God's word comes to them, and they hear what the issue and consequences are to be. It is all in these words which God speaks to the serpent who

represents the evil power of their sin: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shalt bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." In these words the programme of humanity is told. Man is to be in everlasting conflict with his sin. His sin is going to wound him sorely. But ultimately he is going to conquer his sin and kill it.

And is it not true that, in every sincere and earnest life, there comes a time which answers to that critical moment in the world's history? It is the time in which a man finds out his sin, finds that the problem of his life is complicated with the fact of moral evil. Innocence is gone, and lies behind him forever. He has sinned. He is a sinner. What is to come of it? Oh, what a hush and a suspense falls on a life at that discovery! The wanton act of sin has evidently started long trains of consequences, so very much longer than the sinner knew. He listens for the remote reverberations of his wickedness; and to him there comes really the same word of God: "I will put enmity between you and your sin. It shall bruise your heel; but you shall bruise its head." This is the prospect that opens before the man waiting to know what will become of him now that he has sinned,—perpetual conflict with his sin, cruel wounds and pain and hindrance inflicted by his sin on him, and ultimate triumph over his sin by the grace of God, if he will have it.

If I am right, and the words which God spoke in Genesis, when the new world lay overshadowed by the first sin, do really tell the story of your life and

mine to-day; then, for one moment stop and think how wonderful it is. Here is the story of what you and I are, and of what is to happen to us to-day, written away back so many centuries ago that the imagination aches as it struggles on in search of that far-off time. How persistent human character must be! How the lot of the individual is the lot of the race in miniature! How persistent sin is! What is this wondrous Book which so contains the words of God, which prove themselves His words by being eternal and all-reaching in their truth, as He is?

Let us consider this verse in detail, and see how truly it tells the tale of human life, and how nobly it tells it, and in a way that is full of encouragement. I think it ought to bring peace and strength to us, partly from what it has specifically to say to us, and partly from the very fact that to find our story told so far off and so long ago is itself strengthening. It makes us know that we are understood of God.

Take first the fact of the everlasting conflict between man and sin. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed," God says to Satan. That enmity between man and sin has been the great impressive truth of human history. Mankind has never been reconciled with sin, never come to have such an understanding with it that the race everywhere has settled down and made up its mind to being wicked, and asked nothing better, and been at peace. That is the greatest fact by far, the deepest fact, the most pervasive fact in all the world. Conscience, the

restlessness that comes of self-reproach, the discontent that will not let the world be at peace with wong-doing—it runs everywhere. No book of the remotest times, no country of the most isolated seas, no man of strongest character, no crisis of history so exceptional, but that in them all you find man out of peace because he is in sin, unable to reconcile himself with living wrong—the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It is the great fact of human existence.

And is it not a blessed fact? Think how different it would all have been if this fact had not been true from the beginning, if man had been able to settle comfortably into sin and be content. Men read it as a curse, this first declaration of God in Genesis, after the fall. Is it not rather a blessing? Man had met Satan. Then God said, "Since you have met him, the only thing which I can now do for you, the only salvation that I can give you, is that you never shall have peace with one another. You may submit to serve him, but the instinct of rebellion shall never die out in your heart." It was the only salvation left. It is the only salvation left now when a man has begun to sin, that God should perpetually forbid him to be at peace in sinning. It is what has saved earth from becoming hell long ago — this blessed decree of God that however man and sin might live together, there should always be enmity between them, they should be natural foes forever. No man has ever yet been bold enough, even in any mad dream of poetry, to picture the reconciliation of the seed of the serpent and the seed of the wo-

man, man's perfect satisfaction in sin, as the consummation and perfect close of human history.

This enmity consists, like every genuine enmity, in two parts, on two sides. Each party hates the other party. The parties are sin and man. In the first place, then, sin hates man. The proof of that is the harm that sin does man, a harm that men are always coming to discover in deeper and deeper symptoms of it, and of which even the men who cling most obstinately to its service are aware. It would be a strange question what attitude man would be able to preserve towards sin, if, conscious of its essential nature and hating it because of that, it still did really seem to him as if sin were a beneficent and helpful power, as if it were the giver of true happiness and genuine peace. There would be a horrible contradiction between what man saw and what man knew. It would be strange indeed if the sight did not ultimately triumph over the knowledge and man learn to love the sin that loved him so. But we are spared all that. As soon as we get in the least below the surface of our life, comes the conviction even to the wilful sinner that his sin is his enemy. Do you think he does not know it, the man who, every day while he sins, feels the jewels plucked one by one out of his crown, and the stain sinking deeper and deeper into the very substance of his soul? Do not you yourself know it when you do a wrong act, and almost hear the power of evil laugh as he drags you back one hard step farther from your heaven?

And if sin hates man, man hates sin. Is that

true? I do think that the glory of the Bible is that it is full of the idea that the essential humanity, man as God made him, man "pure in heart," man as the child of God, does not love sin, but hates it. With all the intensity with which it asserts man's perverse clinging to sin, it implies, it declares everywhere, that that clinging to sin is diseased; that the true healthy manhood which God first made, and which Christ is trying to restore, shrinks from it and loathes it. Of that manhood we every now and then catch glimpses in the vilest men, something which by its look bears witness to us that it is the truest part of them, which has still left in it something of that antagonism to sin which is the life of the holy God they sprang from.

I have spoken of the essential enmity between the human heart and sin. They fight with one another, and they will always fight. But there is a more special meaning in our verse. The promise has always been held to refer, and no doubt does refer, to Christ. The "seed of the woman" is not merely man in general. It is the Son of man, who in the fulness of time came for the redemption of humanity. And when we turn to Him whose life gives the Bible its unity, who fulfils in the New Testament what is written in the Old, how clearly the truth of the words comes out. For the fact of the life of Jesus is the enmity between Him and sin. Sin hated Him. Open your New Testament and read the story of how He suffered. Think what came to Him through all those three and thirty years. Think of the poverty and misery of His birth, the home-

lessness, the exile, the insults—but I need not tell you the story which has become the central story of history. It was mainly woe, pain, and privation from the beginning to the end. And that would be utterly insignificant if it meant nothing beyond itself, if His sufferings had been nothing but what you and I make out our sufferings to be—the casual hitting of our lives against some point of difficulty, some sharp rock of trouble. They would have had no deep meaning then. We could have read them with a sigh of pity, and dismissed them with an easy tear. But how different it is! Who does not feel it, the stress and vehemence with which trouble attacks the life of Christ? It does not merely happen to Him; it is flung against Him with a violence that is nothing else than personal.

I think that we have all sometimes found ourselves a little puzzled to explain the distinctiveness and peculiar character which we yet clearly feel to be in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. It seemed as if we might catalogue the pains of many another man, and find them equal to His. Even to the last agony of the Crucifixion, there were men who had undergone every physical pain He underwent. And yet His sufferings impressed us as no others did. This Cross was the Cross of the world.

The secret lies in the vehemence with which the sin that persecutes Him seems to hate Him. That makes at once the inevitableness and the nobility of His suffering. Do you remember how He Himself asks the disciples upon the road to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter

into His glory?" Those words are wonderful, as they come from Him, because they declare such a deep, essential, inevitable enmity between His own holy manhood and the sin of the world. When they come into conflict, His manhood must be bruised. It was the noblest proof of His absolute holiness that sin so hated Him. He took from its hostility the proof of His perfectness, and so of His glory.

Can we not understand this? Shape in your own mind a miniature picture of it. Image your dearest and purest friend, the loftiest soul you know, to be cast headlong into the midst of the most vile and vicious company. You go the next day and listen, like Darius at the mouth of Daniel's den, to hear what the result has been. You expect that your trusted friend's soul has escaped corruption. Do you expect it also to have escaped pain? Would you not even be disappointed and shocked if you found that he had escaped pain, and were wholly easy and untroubled? Do you not feel that, in the tokens which you see of how he has suffered written on his face, you are reading really the proof-marks of his nobleness? If you are not equal to understanding that and begin to express to him your pity for his pain, does he not look up at you and, almost echoing the words of Jesus, say, "Ought I not to have suffered these things, and to enter into my glory. How could I have helped suffering them, without being wholly inglorious and base?"

Oh, when you send your boy to college or into the world, remember that, and do not ask for him a

wholly easy life, no obstacles, a cordial, kindly reception from everybody. Do not expect to see him free from anxious doubts and troublesome experiences of soul, and cruel jarrings of his life against the institutions and the men whom he finds in the world. It would be very strange if they did not come to him, if he is genuinely good and pure. "Marvel not," said Jesus Christ, to His disciples, "if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you." He takes the enmity for granted as a first fact. He being what He is, no other reception is conceivable by Him. If we try to conceive of any other, and set our Christ a welcome and honored guest in the midst of men's wickedness, then when we look round at Him whom we have set there, He is our Christ no longer. We do not know how precious is every pang of that pain which the Redeemer suffered, if it can only bear us witness, as we look at it, of how sin hated Him,—of the essential enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

And then add the other thought of how He hated sin, how he hated it for itself, and the impression is complete. I think that anybody who hears Christ speak, whether in rebuke or pity, to any poor creature who is in the power of sin, gets this idea—that He hated sin not merely for its consequences, for the ruin which it works, as we do. He did that as we do not begin to do it, but He hated it also with an intuitive and native hatred of the thing itself, such as is very rare in any strong degree with us. Put these together, Christ's hatred of sin and sin's

hatred of Christ; see them in the long and weary struggle, of which the Temptation in the wilderness was only the picturesque dramatic utterance,—see this, and then you have seen how, upon the crowning heights of human history, that was accomplished which was promised upon its very earliest verge: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed."

And now, if we have thoroughly set in our minds this fact of the world's history—the hatred of Christ and sin,—the question will come: What is the meaning of that fact to us? What does it signify to us that the Son of man had, from the beginning to the end of His life, a constant fight with sin? And we answer: It must be first of all a representation of our own lives. It must open and expound our own lives to us. Is not this a great meaning, almost a worthy meaning of the Incarnation, even if there were no other? For to understand our condition is the first step to the mastery of our condition. To understand our life is the first step towards the living of our life. So when some poor soul is bewildered with the endless obstacles it meets; or some brave man, fighting against wickedness, conceives, perhaps out of the very pleasure which he finds himself taking in the strife, a misgiving lest this endless fight be wrong;—to both of them there comes this fact, that the Man who was most man lived a life of obstacle and struggle, just as they are living. Down from Jerusalem there streams the light that makes their careers intelligible. On the light there comes a voice speaking the words: "Marvel not if the

world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

So Christ's enmity to Satan is representative of ours. But if really representative, it must be something more than representative. That, I think, is always true. He who sets forth distinctly the character of a group or of a race of men, thereby changes, clarifies, establishes, that character. Whenever the nature and destiny of man have found a supreme embodiment in some grand specimen of human life, he has done more than simply show men what they were; he has opened before them new regions, new things to be. When David stands out from the host of the Hebrews, a stripling strong in the strength of God, and, smiting Goliah with the stone out of the brook, shows to his countrymen how strong they are with such a God to trust in, he really works a change in them. Their cowardice is turned into bravery, and they arise and shout and pursue the Philistines.

And so let us not undervalue the blessing which would come to us if Jesus Christ were simply one of us, setting forth with marvellous vividness the universal conflict of the world, the perpetual strife of man with evil. Surely that strife becomes a different thing for each of us, when out of his own little skirmish in some corner of the field, he looks up and sees the Man of men doing just the same work on the hilltop where the battle rages thickest. The schoolboy tempted to tell a lie, the man fighting with his lusts, the soldier struggling with cowardice, the statesman with corruption, the poor

creature fretted by the thousand little pin-pricks of a hostile world,—they all find the dignity of their several battles asserted, find that they are not unnatural but natural, find that they are not in themselves wicked but glorious, when they see that the Highest, entering into their lot, manifested the eternal enmity between the seed of the serpent and our common humanity at its fiercest and bitterest.

But yet this is not the full meaning of the battle of Jesus Christ with sin. We know it is not. He was like us. He was, He is, eternally our representative. We have a right to all the strength and comfort, to all the new aspect which is given to the battle of our life by the firm assurance of that. But, along with His true likeness to us, He was something unspeakably different from what we are. When He fought with sin and overcame the world's pain by undergoing it, He not merely left all other fighters stronger because He was human, and therefore their Brother; He left sin weaker because He was divine, and therefore its Master.

Our Christian faith is this: that the struggle of Christ with sin was more than one event in the long fight of humanity with sin, however splendid that event might be. It was the consummation and essential completion of the struggle. It was the victory. It was the King coming down into the battle to finish it, to give the blow that should assure its end. The struggle still goes on, each soldier struggles still; but each struggles in a strife already won, and lays hold of a victory already certain. Do we understand that truth,—how great, how deep,

how glorious it is? Let us know the Life of Christ more deeply. Let us read it and meditate upon it, and let it freely in to show its power upon our lives; and then, when we have laid hold of His Divinity, it will seem simply impossible that such as He is should have lived and died in strife with sin, and yet left sin as He found it. No power of victory that is attributed to such a life as His can seem too great to be true.

But what should be made the most of just here is, that in Jesus the fact of the essential and eternal enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, between sin and man, was supremely manifested. It is not strange or unnatural. It is most natural. Oh, if we could all learn and believe that! Try to remember it in your lives. You live in struggle, and you think it hard. But if you were not in struggle you would be disowning your manhood. You are simply meeting the necessity of being a man. O struggler, take that necessity, and be thankful and struggle on! And if you are a coward, and want to run out of the battle, get courage from the thought that you cannot run out of it. It reaches everywhere that manhood reaches. You might as well fight out your share of it upon your little plot of ground as upon any other.

And if you are looking up at another man, and admiring him and envying him, and thinking how calm and free from struggle his life is, and getting discontented and discouraged because yours is so different from his; it will relieve all that if you can know that he certainly has his struggle because he

too is a man; and that just so far as it is different from yours, just so far very likely it is harder than yours. Or yet again if you want to save some fallen brother, and try to make a bad man good again, it certainly will help you to know something of the fight in which he fell, to be assured that the poor fellow has not gone abroad to find his ruin. It has come to him. He is simply a wreck on that same sea where all of us are sailing; and the more we have been beaten by the storm ourselves, the more we shall understand where his masts have gone to, and how his bulwarks came to be beaten in. Everywhere life is clearer to us by the old truth of Genesis.

But as yet I have spoken of only half that truth. I have dwelt only on the fact of the enmity between man and sin. I must speak very briefly of the remainder of our verse, that which declares what the issue of the long struggle is to be. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." The wounded heel of man! The broken head of sin! Is not the promise this: that man, trusting in God, shall come out of the strife wounded but victorious, victorious but wounded; and so, that in the expectation of both, of the wounds by the way and the victory at the end, is the true disposition of man towards life?

If this be the promise, it is perfectly verified in the supreme seed of the woman, in Christ and the struggle of His life. He was wounded sorely; a life all torn and bleeding He dragged out to the end;

but when the end came it was victorious. Look at Him on the cross. What words could tell the story like these: "He shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel"? Sin has taken the Saviour and fastened Him there. It has driven in the nails and crowded down the crown of thorns upon the forehead. It has seemed to have its own way with Him, and all the while, with those hands closing in agony over the nails, He is crushing its life out. As we read the story, what sin is doing to Christ and what Christ is doing to sin take their true places and proportions. Sin is tormenting Him, but He is vanquishing sin. And what took place upon the cross has taken place ever since. Sin hinders the work, and insults the name of Christ; but Christ in the long run and in the end overcomes sin and insult and scorn. It bruises His heel, and He bruises its head.

And what is true of Himself, He makes true of the world which He is leading on to ever better things. I think that the prospect of human progress against the powers of ignorance and brutality and selfishness which stop its way, reduces itself more and more clearly to this: They shall bruise its heel and it shall bruise their heads. Not without wounds, not without mortifying and distressing disappointments shall any good cause advance to its success. He is a foolish dreamer who expects an easy and bloodless victory for any noble plan. But yet, success waits before every good cause, if it can only persevere and struggle on with its wounded heel. He is a foolish slave to first appearances who lets

the immediate wound shut the final victory out of his sight. It is in this truth, pervading all of human history, that there lies the secret of that strong presence of pathos in every enthusiastic hope and triumphant thanksgiving of mankind. It grows more and more solemn and touching to us, I think. The highest hopes and loftiest rejoicings always have a touch of sadness to them. The flowers of our Decoration Days are always laid on graves. It is because deep into the convictions of men's hearts has sunk this truth of long experience, that there is no victory except by wounds. That truth has made all the larger and better actions of the world sober with a fine soberness. It has caused soberness indeed to be the necessary accompaniment and warrant of true strength. The coward who shrinks from the wounds, and the boaster who forgets that there are wounds, are both ruled out of the best work of the world.

And when we turn from the world's large experience—of which it is not well to speculate and talk too much—and look at our own private lives, the same truth appears there, too. Every earnest man grows to two strong convictions: one, of the victory to which a life may come; the other of the obstacles and wounds which it must surely encounter in coming there. Alas for him who gains only one of these convictions! Alas for him who learns only confidence in the result, and never catches sight of all that must come in between—the pains and blows and disappointments! How many times he will sink down and lose his hope! How many times

some wayside cross will seem to be the end of everything to him!

Alas also for him who only feels the wounds and sees no victory ahead! How often life will seem to him not worth the living! There are multitudes of men of this last sort; men with too much seriousness and perception to say that the world is easy, too clear-sighted not to see its obstacles, too pure not to be wounded and offended by its wickedness, but with no faith large enough to look beyond and see the end; men with the wounded heel that hinders and disables them, but with no strength to set the wounded foot upon the head of the serpent and to claim their triumph. Only, friends! do not expect to win the battle of your life without wounds. Do not expect to be good with a goodness unscarred by temptation, and untorn by the rocks of doubt and difficulty on which you have fallen. If you do, you will surely come to disappointment which may grow into despair. But, on the other side, do not let any certainty of wounds deter you from the battle; do not let any assurance that you will fail, and fall, and sin again and again and again, shut out from you the brighter certainty that if you will cling to God He will bring you to His holiness. Be watchful to keep your strength as strong as possible; but be happy if in the vision of the future you can just see yourself crawling up, all wounds and blood, to the fountain at the end, and laying yourself, ready to die, in that water which is eternal life.

And do not spread it out too thin, this truth of ours, by applying it merely to your whole life. It

must be that many a one of you has some special task upon his mind which needs its application. You are asking yourself, "What will happen if I do this duty, if I resist this temptation in order to be dutiful to-morrow?" Get your answer out of the old Book of Genesis. That temptation is your Satan. "It will bruise your heel, but you shall bruise its head." Do not think the victory will be easy. Do not think the precious fruit will drop of itself into your open hands. You must wrench it off of the tree of difficulty; but it is certainly yours if you will take it. It would be good indeed if this verse could to-day give strength to some one of you to do a duty to-morrow which he had been almost ready not to do.

And now, come back to Christ. Let Him stand clearly before us as we close — Christ with His wounds and His victory. His wounds and victory were both for us. He promised them both together to us, because, for us as for Him, they were inseparable. He promised them both together when He stretched out His hands and said: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be."

XVIII.

BULK AND ESSENCE.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."—MATTHEW xii. 20.

MATTHEW is telling us how his Master loved to work in quietness, and how, when His works of mercy were the most abundant and the crowd grew greatest, Christ withdrew Himself, and charged those whom He had healed that they should not make Him known.

And Matthew goes on to declare that this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet; and then he goes back and quotes the words in which 750 years before, Isaiah had written the description of the servant of the Lord who was to come. In that description are these words: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

We cannot doubt that Matthew had often heard his Master quote these words, and take them to Himself. As Christ grew up to maturity, and recognized the purpose of His life, and found how

exceptional He was among men, we can well understand what a strength and delight it must have been for Him to look back and see that, here and there, words had been spoken and lives had been lived, which had anticipated and prepared for Him. The world was not all unready for His coming. Men in other times had dreamed of such a life as He had at last come to live; and though they had not succeeded in realizing their dream, and, so far as they had attempted it, the world had always hated it and cast it out; yet still their shining presences in history made a true line of light which might now lead the eyes of men to Him, and cause Him to be comprehensible to them. There were souls which were His own, to which He could come. Some of them would perhaps receive Him. He was not astray in the world. He was in fulfilment of its loftiest purposes and divinest hopes. Its highest standards, which had been partially realized by its best men, bore witness to Him that it was His Father's world. Therefore in it, though it ignored Him and misunderstood Him, and even crucified Him, He could still count Himself at home. This is the pathetic side of Christ's quotations of prophecies, with regard to Himself, from the Old Testament prophets. This is the feeling which we can discover beating underneath this, His quotation from Isaiah.

Let us study that word of Isaiah and of Christ. It is a declaration of the way in which the true servant of God will always do his best and most creative work. Through the tumult of the old Hebrew history, through the uproar of the temple and the

days of Herod, through each there is seen walking some one figure which bears the true impress of creative energy. In each of these times it is from this figure that the power is to proceed which is to draw forth and keep all of the good that the past has in it, and which is to make all things new. And the great characteristic of each of those figures is its quietness. Of each of them it is said, "He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets." How that gives us a new key with which to unlock the puzzles of History! The creative powers are quiet. It is the destructive forces which make the noise. The tornado, the hailstorm, and the thunderbolt shake the earth and make it tremble. The dew, the shower, and the sunshine come noiselessly.

The destructive forces, indeed, cannot be spared. The earth needs them again and again to clear the way for the work of creation which is to follow. No book resounds more than some parts of the Bible do with the fury of the forces of destruction doing their terrible work. From the flashing of the fiery swords over the closed gate of Eden, to the plunge of the beast and the false prophet as they are cast together into the lake of brimstone, in the Apocalypse, the voice of destruction, of revolution, of restraint, is ever breaking forth from time to time. But he reads the Bible very feebly and superficially who does not know that it is not these passages which make the Bible to really be the Bible, the Book of God. It is in the record of creative force; it is in the story of the soundless Genesis of life; it is in

the peaceful harmony of harps that the real power and music of the Book abide.

Oh, that we could realize that this is true through all the history of man! that we could see how it is almost always the destructive forces which make the noise and win the wonder and applause of men, and realize that however the destructive forces may have their true place, and the noisy outcry may be sometimes necessary, the real strength of life is in creative effort which moves as quietly among the tasks of men as Jesus Christ walked along the lanes of Galilee.

You who are called to fight for truth—it may be your duty to take error by the throat and drown its war-cries with loud denunciation. If that is your duty, do it! Do it unsparingly and bravely. Do it so that your destruction of the error may be as final and complete as possible. But be thoroughly glad when it is done, and you may go on to better work. Do not let yourself think that noisy denunciation, however necessary it may be, is the best work that a man can do. Honor and do not despise the men who are quietly creative. Value it as the best part of your life if, anywhere in the midst of the tumult of destruction, you are able to put your finger under any load and lift it, or fasten with your encouragement any stone of real purposeful achievement in its place.

But I must come more directly to the point of my sermon. In the text, Jesus Christ is speaking of the treatment which He and all the true servants of God will give to weakness and limitation. It is

surely something which we should like to know. Here is our world all full of failure. Here are our lives which, all of them, more or less, are failures. We know a little, but we do not know enough. We can do something, but our strength speedily breaks down. There is a little character and a little faith, but they are very little; and to think for a moment that they are more than little only proves what feeble standards of faith and character we have. So it is to-day; and so it has been always.

Now, suppose that it becomes clearly known to us that into this world there is coming an absolutely perfect Being, a Being positively perfect, a Being who not merely never does what is wrong, but who is vividly, eagerly, thoroughly alive in every good activity. Will not the question spring up in our hearts: "How will this Perfect One, who sets no limits to His own duty and enthusiasm, deal with the poor half-hearted folk into whose streets and houses He has come?"

We know the answer to that question which our experience of men suggests. We know how often men who have reached proficiency in any good attainment grow contemptuous about the feeble, fitful efforts after the same attainment which less devoted or less able men are making. The man whose whole life is given up to one great cause, to the freeing of the slave or the rescue of the drunkard, loses all patience with his neighbor who gives to either of these pressing needs only a little share of the interest which he divides among many causes. The devoted student of a special science thinks less

than nothing of the amateur trifling with his favorite study, which is all that the man who is busily occupied with pressing duties has time for.

Most noteworthy of all, the passionate searcher after character, the man who is struggling to resist temptation and to do his duty, he is not able always to see value in these poor, temporary outbursts of ambition to be holy which occasionally break forth out of the lives of men, who in general are given up to selfishness. It must be hard for him. He is a man to whom life has come to mean simply one long, intense struggle after goodness. He sleeps and wakes in the presence of his enemies, which are his passions and temptations. His armor is never off. His every thought is trying to devise some new means for his warfare. And then he looks about him and sees you and me feebly praising virtue, provided it is not too excessively and fanatically virtuous, feebly tying a riband in our cap and marching in processions in honor of goodness, when the road is safe and when the day is bright. No wonder that he is moved with something like contempt! It is the feeling of the regular army for the holiday militia. No wonder that he is almost ready to say, "If you are not ready for more serious work than that, put off your armor altogether. Do not pretend to be struggling for righteousness, if you have no more energy to put into the fight than that. If the reed is so bruised, better break it altogether. If the lamp with its smoking flaxen wick is so nearly gone out, better let it die,—aye, better even quench and extinguish it."

This is all natural enough — natural, that is, in the lower range of probability, as an expression of the baser and weaker side of men.

But now here comes Jesus Christ, and at Him we look with anxious curiosity, for in Him we know that we shall see this problem, like so many problems, lighted up with new illumination. He comes, a burning and a shining light; and all around Him are these flickering and smoking wicks. He comes with the true divine fibre of humanity unharmed in Him; and all around him are these twisted, crushed, broken lives, bruised from without and with subtle, lurking poison corrupting them within. Look at Him, as He shines there in the pages of the Gospels! What do you see? Is there a symptom of contempt? Is there not, on the contrary, the tenderest and most reverent care for everything which there is of good, or of effort to be good, in every man or woman, no matter how little it may be?

I think of Jesus Christ as He sat by the woman of Samaria beside the well; I think of Him as He stretched out His hand to raise the faithless, sinking Peter; I think of Him as He turned His weary head upon the cross to catch the mere whisper of faith that fluttered on the last breath of the dying thief; I let these, and a multitude of other remembrances of Him, open to me the whole spirit of His life. I bid that spirit of His life stand out in general from the whole body of the graphic record, and how plain it all is! There could not be a grain of true gold in any life, that Jesus Christ did not see it and love it. There could not be the lightest tremble of desire for

good in any soul of all the multitude before Him, that did not touch His heart and make it tremble too. Not one indication is there anywhere in His life of that which I have just described,—the despising, by Him who stands upon the summit of the pyramid, of the poor crawling aspirants who are just starting at the base.

This is surely one of the most noteworthy things in the whole history of Christ. When we look for its explanation, and try to see what characteristic of His nature lay at the root of this habit of His action, I think we find what we are seeking in that intense appreciation of the real qualities of things which belonged supremely to Him, as it belongs, in its degree, to all true and fine characters. The common nature, the vulgar man, cares not so much for qualities as for quantities. His eye is fixed on bulk, not essence. He thinks more of a great villain than of a little saint. And no sainthood is a real thing to him, unless it is clothed in light, and brilliantly shines upon the world. He can perceive no fragrance, unless the air is heavy with it. He can hear no zephyr till it swells into a whirlwind. The fact that an act has the true quality of greatness, though it has so little of it that the act itself is not a great act,—this fact does not interest the vulgar man. The fact that a man has the true quality of unselfishness or devotion, though it is so broken and distorted that it can make no great and brilliant sacrifices, seems to him insignificant.

Do you not recognize what I mean when I say that, with Christ and with men who are like Christ,

all this is different? With them the perception of the quality of things is instant and unerring; and when good quality is found in anything it wins from them precisely the same kind of honor, whatever may be its degree. The same true quality of fire is in the smouldering lamp-wick that is in the blazing sun. The true quality of woody fibre is in the poor twig, crushed and trampled out of shape under men's feet in the muddy roadway, as well as in the splendid oak that fronts the sunlight on the hill! Whatever value belongs essentially to fire and fibre, the wise and fine man gives to the qualities of those things always, in their least as well as in their greatest exhibitions. They are precious in themselves, and the hope of the growth which is proper to fire and to fibre is never lost so long as those qualities are truly there.

How many are the instances in which this distinction between the reverence for pure quality, or essence, and the reverence for quantity, or bulk, applies. Take our pride in our country. What a difference there is between the patriot who simply boats of her that she is "big," and the other patriot whose eye is fastened with anxiety on the things which, great or little, make her an object of interest and value, a true, fresh contribution to the multitude of national life which fills the world. Let her be little, let her be inglorious, if only she is pure, and gives her people freedom, and helps them in their freedom to live useful, happy, upright lives. What a difference there is between the traveller who, in foreign lands, boasts of his country's

population, and the other traveller who, wherever he goes, praises and maintains his country's principles! The country which is proud of its bulk is sure to be contemptuous and, if the temptation comes, to be a bully towards the nations that are small. The country that believes and rejoices in her principles will be quick with sympathy and help for any least and most degraded nations in whose heart the faintest fire of those principles is burning.

Then think in the same way of the Church. It was recently said to me that the most important question for the Church in our time is the financial question. Alas for us, if the Church came to think like that! The financial question is a question of bulk. It has no relation to character. It inquires, "How great can we make the Church?" not, "What can we make the Church?" You might make the Church as rich as you please, and make her narrower and baser all the time. The questions of faith, of worship, of spiritual life, of missions, are questions of essential quality. No Church is healthy which is not ready to see herself made indefinitely small and poor, if only she can keep and feel growing within her the love of God and love of man which are the essence of the Church's life.

Or, think of your own faith. The question must be, my dear friends, first of all, not "What do we believe?" but, "How do we believe?" It is not the length of our creed, but the way in which we hold it, long or short, that marks our real worth as believers. What we have most of all to dread is not the limitation, but the degradation of belief. I

know that He who desires for us that we should hold all truth, who means for us that ultimately every one of us shall hold all truth, would far rather, as He looks into our hearts, see one fragment of truth spiritually, unselfishly, lovingly held there, than a great mass of truth, however true, feebly grasped, and valued, in any degree, for the advantage which it brings to us the holders.

Bulk has, indeed, its value. A great deal of a good thing is more precious than a little of the same good thing. The oak-tree on the hillside is worth more than the twig lying bruised and trampled in the muddy road. The sun gives more light than the smoking flax. I do not forget that the same Bible which has the Book of Acts has also the Book of the Revelation. The same New Testament which has the story of the little company gathered trembling behind closed doors in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, has also the gorgeous picture of the multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. The Book of Acts has the indignant Church casting out Simon Magus, and crying to him, "Thy money perish with thee!" insisting on purity even when purity could only be secured at the sacrifice of numbers and of wealth. But the Book of the Revelation has the vision of the open-gated City, where there shall be no night, and into which shall be brought the glory and honor of the nations, the Church gathering into herself all the richness and greatness of the whole world.

It is possible, in other words, to take what I have been saying and misread it into an affected love of littleness for its own sake, a praise of constraint and limitation even when they are not necessary as the price of purity. So the narrow sectarian not merely is willing to see his sect small, if so only it can be orthodox. He has often been ready to think it orthodox just in proportion as it was small, and to grudge it the growth which, if it really held the truth of God, it ought to crave. In a healthily constituted world like ours, in a world over which God rules, the Good always ought to be reaching out to become the Large. Only, our truth is this: that before the Good becomes the Large, while it still remains the Small, it ought to honor itself, and it ought to receive honor from others, for its essential quality of goodness.

Do not the young men need to understand this, they whose standards of life are every day being formed? It is no easy thing to keep at once the deep love of reality which insists that what we have be true, however small it be; and at the same time to keep the aspiration and ambition which desire to hold as richly as possible every good possession of a human soul. It is easy to fall into the way of saying: "I believe very little, but, at least, what I do believe I believe really; and I do not pretend to believe what I do not believe, and I do not care to believe very much"; or to say about action, "I do not undertake to do much for fellow-man; but, at any rate, in what I do undertake I am no hypocrite, and I am satisfied with that."

Do you not know such talk, and is there not something very shallow in it? To believe a great deal, and yet to believe it all as really as you now believe your little; to undertake everything in your power to help your fellow-man, and yet to be no hypocrite in any of it,—that alone is the worthy ambition of a manly man. The deliberate sacrifice of bulk to essence, to genuineness, of quantity to quality, is a temporary act, done for a temporary purpose. The time must come when the best shall be universal. "The earth is the Lord's"; "He is the King of the whole earth." If, for the moment, any part of the earth must be reckoned to be not His but His enemy's, it must be only in order that on what is really and already His, His power may gather itself to go forth and conquer and possess the whole. Great is the power of the young man who, at the beginning of and throughout an earnest life, can be possessed with the double power of profound thoroughness and illimitable hope.

The identity of essence in things which are very different from one another in size and shape and look, is one of the most interesting and important principles alike in the physical and in the moral world. It is a principle the application of which is illuminating modern science. A simplicity which gives new unguessed majesty to nature is seen and felt everywhere issuing from beneath the complexity which makes her superficial aspect. In the world of morals the same principle clears up many obscurities, and scatters many sophistries. It takes two lives: one of them arrogant, brutal, overbearing;

the other of them gentle, compliant, unobtrusive; and, unveiling the power and meaning which lie at the heart of each, it says, "The real essence of the two is the same. They both mean selfishness." It takes the feeble sin of the puppet of society, cruel and heartless in the little world in which he lives, and makes it evident that it is the same kind of sin with the stupendous inhumanity of a Roman Emperor or an Inquisitor of Spain. Thus it makes that which is insignificant in degree seem horrible in kind. It brings out the color in what we call a small trangression, by the lurid light which stares out from the more flagrant sin.

The truth which we have been studying from the words of Christ simply presents this principle upon the other side. Then it becomes very rich and gracious. It declares the hope that is in the least goodness just as the other application of the principle declared the danger that is in the least wickedness. Are not these two things the things we need to know? The great goodnesses and the great wickednesses it is easy to discern. It must be easy, we think, for the martyrs to know that they are meeting God's will, and to get the inspiration of that knowledge. It must be easy for the murderers to know that they are horribly wicked, and to be haunted by the horror of their wickedness. But for the schoolboy to know that his struggle not to tell a lie is a steadfastness of the same sort as the martyr's unflinching constancy before the flame; and for the quarrelsome slanderer to know that his petulance belongs in the same category with the crime of mur-

der—those are the hard things. Modern mechanics largely employs itself in turning to use and effect little streams of force which have heretofore been usually wasted. It is the waste of the hope which is in the heart of small endeavors to be good, and of the fear which ought to come out of the least flagrant developments of evil, that is always robbing our moral life of strength.

Christ sets Himself to remedy that waste. He would fain make the least endeavor for a better life a ground of hope, and a starting point of higher struggle. Look at Christ and Simon Peter! See them some day, as they walk along the road talking together. We have grown used to the sight and have forgotten how strange it is, but it is very strange! How far apart these beings are! One is the very embodiment of the eternal righteousness, pure as the spotless heavens, deep and strong as the vast profundity of space. The other is a poor, stumbling Jew from Bethsaida. One is a smoking lamp that hardly keeps itself alive; the other is the Sun of Righteousness. One is a bruised reed, all torn and broken; the other is the Tree of Life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Yet look! See the clear eyes of Jesus gazing into the thick and muddy soul of Peter. He finds Himself there. He finds a child of the God whose Son He is, in that poor fragmentary character. He finds, in this poor Jew's frantic and fitful struggles, a bit of the same holiness which fills His own life with peace. What then? Do you not see what grows up in the soul of each as they thus walk together

and as Christ thus discerns Peter, and as Peter knows that Christ has discerned him? Peter is filled with hope; Christ is filled with pity. There is no scorn in the heart of Christ, and in the heart of Peter there is no despair.

Remember David in the 28th Psalm: "Unto thee will I cry, my God, my strength!" He knows how weak the cry is! It seems not possible that God can hear it! He is a bruised reed, a smoking flax! We can see him look up to God with most pathetic appeal: "Think no scorn of me; lest, if thou make as though thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit." It is the prayer of the smoking flax not to be quenched, of the bruised reed not to be broken. Can there be any answer but one from God to such a prayer as that—the answer of encouragement and hope? Can there be any surprise when, by and by, breaks forth from the Psalmist's soul the triumphant verse: "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield."

Two exhortations come, I think, from all our study.

The first bids us be very tolerant and hopeful about all the limitation and deadness which we lament in our fellow-men. You are giving your life's blood for a great cause, and your friend gives it nothing but a casual approval, perhaps now and then a casual dollar or a moment's help. You are overwhelmed with pity or amazement to see the

little strength which men put out against their sins, who nevertheless are really fighting them. Be patient. Make much of the good effort which there is, small though it be. Never dare to say, "It might as well not be at all, it is so little." Be sure that there is no proof so strong that you yourself are growing rich in righteousness as is to be found in the growing reverence and value which you feel for the slightest beginnings of righteousness in other men.

Then apply all this to God, and the other exhortation comes. Because He is the supreme Righteousness, therefore, just for that reason, the least beginning of righteousness in you is supremely precious in His sight. Make it, then, precious in your own. Treasure the smallest faith. Guard the least flame of love. Take your poor, battered, broken resolution, smooth it out, cleanse and confirm it with new consecration, set it up in your safest and most sacred chamber. Do all this not desperately, but hopefully; for God is strong, eternity is long, and that which lives to-day with any spark or fibre of true life, has in it the promise and potency of all the holiness of heaven.

XIX.

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL FORCES.

"Truth shall flourish out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven."—PSALMS lxxxv. 11.

ON the 17th of September, 1656, two hundred and twenty-nine years ago, Oliver Cromwell delivered a remarkable speech at the opening of the second protectorate Parliament of England. The whole speech is remarkable, but the close especially is most unlike to anything which before or since has been addressed to any national political assembly. After speaking on many things of public interest, he suddenly turns and tells the representatives of England that he "did read a psalm yesterday, which truly may not unbecome both me to tell of and you to observe." The rest of his speech is a strange sort of commentary and meditation on this 85th Psalm, from which I take my text. When he approaches the end of it, we seem to hear his rough voice glow and tremble and grow deep as he rehearses the great prophecy: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that

which is good, and our land shall yield her increase." Before how many other eyes that vista has been opened, and the vision of these words has glowed! What hope it has awakened and kept undyingly alive—this great, glowing prophecy which falls in words of matchless music at the end of the 85th Psalm of David!

Let us study that prophecy a while, and study it in the only way in which a prophecy ever ought to be studied, as an illumination of present life and a guide to present conduct. It may be the worst thing possible for us to have the curtain drawn aside, and be allowed to revel in the prospect of the glorious days that are to be, unless we turn back, with our eyes full of that prospect, and understand more deeply by its light the poor, blurred, struggling Present in the midst of which we are still living. The almost fatal fault of a great deal of personal religion has been that it has gloried in the hope of heaven, but has not let that hope play freely on the ordinary life of earth, to illuminate its problems, to rebuke its baseness, and to inspire its duties. Let us not deal so with this prophecy. Let us try to understand what sort of a life that will be in which truth springs out of the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven, so that we may see how far our life is from being that to-day, and perhaps may discover how we can bring it now a little nearer to the realization of that picture.

The point of the prophecy seems then to lie in this, that earth and heaven, the lower and the higher world, are represented as co-operating to produce

the high condition which is promised. There are two natural meanings, it seems to me, of such a representation.

First and most literally, I take the earth to mean that world of forces which have their origin in the nature of this familiar planet where we live. It is the visible and tangible world, a world which we think that we understand because it is presenting itself to our senses all the time. Heaven, on the other hand, is the mysterious world that is invisible, the world in the existence of which some men are always trying to convince themselves that they do not believe, but which the race of men is never able to let go,—the great mysterious world which we in general call the supernatural.

How these two words, earth and heaven, represent the two great divisions of the thought of man! When you look abroad over a wide, open country, there are two parts of what you see; one, the green earth with its bright fields and sombre forests, and rivers and lakes, with its trees and houses, fences and barns, and all the clear signs of man's activity; and the other, the blue sky, the birthplace of the winds, the home of sunlight and of stars, as mysterious and far-away as the first one is close by and familiar. And as the horizon at once separates these two and joins them to each other, and he who watches stands between the two, between the heavens and the earth, and feels his one world made of the two together; so all man's thinking goes on between the natural and supernatural, between the simple, definite, familiar operations of practical life,

the buying and the selling, the building and delving and contriving, the social relationships and governmental operations, which make the movement of the earth; and, on the other hand, the vague, unaccountable, transcendental influences which come out of the realm of unseen things, the regions where supernal beings live, the home to which the dead have gone, and where the yet unborn are waiting for their day to live, the heavens and hells, the House where God is as He is not here, the whole great universe which comes not to the knowledge of the eye or ear, but in which man believes by the subtler witness which it bears of itself directly to the soul.

I assume the existence of these two regions. The first, no man denies. We see and feel it every day. The second, man believes in, however men have now and then denied it.

And now the promise is that these two worlds are some day to come to perfect harmony and co-operation, and to conspire to influence the life of man. The truth which springs out of the one shall also drop out of the other. The great perfection is to come by the moral unity of heaven and earth,—not as something worked out by the machinery of the lower world, its government and society and trade and study gradually accomplishing for itself man's highest good; nor, on the other hand, dropped out of heaven ready-made, a blessing in whose accomplishment the earth has had no share; not in either of these ways, but as the result of their mutual effort, the fruit of lower and higher forces both

working together for the highest moral ends,—so will the "far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves," at last be reached.

Let us consider very carefully and clearly just what it is that is involved in such a prophecy as this. Think what the promise that it gives us is. Think also what the limitations of that promise are. It says to every man who is trying to do right, and finding the struggle very hard—to every man who, trying to do right, has summoned to his aid all the best influences which this earthly life can furnish, and who has learned by sad experience to fear that they are not sufficient,—to every such man it says that there are other influences which are trying to help him coming out of higher regions than this earth. "The heavens are helping you," it says. "The world of spirits is your ally. The unseen universe is on your side. In ways you cannot guess, with an intimacy of approach which you can never know, righteousness is looking down from heaven on your endeavor to be a righteous man." That is a splendid assurance. But see how very definite it is. It is all moral. It promises nothing but righteousness out of heaven.

Now, when I think how men have dealt with their belief in the unseen world, I am struck by the thought that what they have mostly asked of that world has been something else than righteousness, and therefore does not fall within the lines of this great promise. Think of it! The old astrologers questioned the stars to know their fates. They waited and listened night after night to hear some

message out of the sky, to tell them where they were to seek their fortunes, how long they were to live, and when they were to die. The modern Spiritualist tries to peer through the veil which separates the living from the dead, and what he mainly promises himself is consolation, some mitigation of the awful loneliness which fills his empty house. The Christian Scientist thinks he feels the whole air thrilling with power from the depths of the unseen, and it seems to be to him almost entirely the power of physical healing; he is to have his sickness cured. The great ghost-haunted world has rung with inquiries for the satisfaction of its curiosity, but certainly not with cravings for a purer life and a more steadfast strength against temptation. Wealth, comfort, health, knowledge,— these are all good things, no doubt. If the unseen world can give them to us, it is right that we should take them. But they are not the greatest things. Not one of them is absolutely necessary. Righteousness, goodness, strength of character, those are the only things which a true man must have, things which he cannot live without. And so I cannot help believing that a large part of man's questioning of the unseen world has been futile because he has not questioned it for the one thing which it was eager to bestow. He has asked it to make him rich, to give him consolation, to cure his sickness, and not above and before all other things to give him righteousness.

Here comes forth one of the great glories of the Christian faith. Christianity is a perpetual assertion of the moral purpose of the relations between man

and the unseen world. In it the mists grow thin, the curtain falls. It is a revelation. But a revelation of what? Only and always of that regarding God and heaven whereby man may grow better, braver, stronger, purer. It is not a revelation of the essential nature of God, nor of the conditions of His everlasting life; not of what God is, but of what He does; yet not of what He does in the great universe or in the region of pure power; nor of how He made the worlds and of how He will bring the worlds to the catastrophe in which they shall perish; but of what He does to us to which our life ought to respond; of how He loves us, of how He commands us. Wherever men have tried to force Christianity beyond its appointed purpose, they have evidently been doing it violence; and it has always resented the violence they did it by losing its power, and ceasing to give them its best blessing.

Here has been the birthplace of evil dogmatism. Men have said to Christianity, "Tell us how old the world is! Tell us the composition of the Divine Being. Tell us how long and in what way God means to punish the wicked. Tell us what God required before He could forgive mankind." And always the answers which they thought they got to those questions came to them hard and rigid, and bred in them bitter and uncharitable dispositions. But whenever men have begged of their great Religion simply the influence which should make them better men, saying, "Oh, drive out our sin, and fill us with holiness, with unselfishness, with truthfulness!" she has responded with a quickness and pro-

fusion which showed that now, at least, they had touched the key of her true purpose; now they had summoned her to the task which she most loved, and for which she recognized that she was made!

Is such a definition and limitation of its purpose a degradation of our great Faith? Is it a demand that she shall abdicate the highest offices and count herself fit only for a lower task? Surely not so! It is the crowning of her with the hardest duty that any power can undertake upon the earth. We do not know what force might be needed to remove mountains, to pluck the Himalayas from their seat and toss them into the midst of the astonished sea; we only know that it must be a force so different in kind as to be incomparable with the other kind of force by which a human nature shall be changed down to its root and a bad man be made good. But the longer we live, the more certainly we come to know that no force of any kind can be greater or more glorious than this which undertakes to regenerate a human life. Who would not rather transform badness into goodness than read the secrets of the stars or turn the ocean from its bed? So hard to do, so great a triumph when it is done, appears to us as we grow older the conquering of these wild passions and the bringing out of the possibilities of a human soul!

It is a moral power, then, that the unseen world is to exert upon our human life. And then, the next question rises; whether it is possible for us to know the nature of that influence. How can the parts of the universe which we do not see make it

possible for us to live better lives here in our earthly homes? It is a great question. We cannot know all its answer. But we may know something of it. We may say at least this: that the very knowledge that the unseen world is moral must bring strength and clearness to the moral life of any human being who apprehends that truth.

Do you see what I mean? Here is a man trying to do right, and finding it very hard. He hears men all about him calling him a fool because he tries. He sees men all about him acting as if there were no difference of right and wrong. His own heart is full of misgivings. He is sorely tempted. His passions rise up against his principles, and denounce them as tyrants. Tell me, will it be anything—nay, will it not be everything—to that man if he can know that the right and wrong which make the subjects of his hourly struggles are things not only of this narrow earth of his, but of the whole wide universe? Will it not be everything to him to know that there is no world, out to the farthest bounds of space, in which it is not wrong to lie or steal, or to do impurity; no world where it is not good for any being, of whatever most exalted or degraded sort he may be, to tell the truth, to be pure, and to forget himself in serving others?

Only suppose the opposite of that. Suppose that the poor creature struggling to do right, here upon our earth, with so much here against him, came to know that all this distinction between right and wrong was a purely local thing; that all the beings of the unseen worlds knew nothing of it, that there

was a whole universe in which happy and effective life went on without any dream of there being anything disorderly in stealing, or lying, or murdering, or being selfish. Would not his feeble struggle grow far feebler still? Would not morality often seem to him like a mere provincial prejudice? Would not his fight often seem to him but a fruitless folly? Would not truth cease to spring out of the earth when righteousness had ceased to look down from heaven?

We can easily see how the same thing is true upon a smaller scale. Here is some man in a barbarian country, in Timbuctoo or Madagascar. A spark of divine fire has fallen into his heart, and has kindled there the fuel of his better nature. He has rebelled against the brutality and wickedness by which he is surrounded. He has begun to struggle for a better life. Truth has sprung out of the gross earth of his savage circumstances. The savage men around him laugh at him. They hate him. Even if their hearts admire him, they think his poor struggle the most hopeless dream. Hundreds of times, in his despondent moods, the poor fellow is ready to think so himself.

Then suppose that for a moment the curtain can be lifted which hides from him the world of civilized and Christian life. Suppose that some voice finds its way across the seas, to tell this solitary struggler that there are lands in which the struggle which in his island seems so exceptionally strange is the accepted law of life; that there are lands where the things he seeks are recognized as the only worthy

prizes of a human soul, the things without the attainment of which any life is a wretched failure. A breath out of this great tempest of desire for more perfect human living, which we call civilization, strays in and blows with coolness and refreshment on his heated forehead. Is he not filled with new courage? Does not the impossible grow possible to him as he listens? These distant, unseen lands, where higher life is lived, are to him a very heaven. To see righteousness looking down out of that heaven makes the ground under his feet to blossom with new hope. Behold! the love of beauty, the culture of character, the desire for progress, the service of fellow-man—they are not dreams! They are realities! The best parts of the world are full of their realization now. He who in barbarism imagines them, and struggles for them, has only caught sight of what it really is to be a man.

Is not our illustration perfect? Must it not be that if to you and me there can be made known simply this with regard to heaven—not where it is, not what the blessed souls are doing there, but only this—that there goodness is the power of life, and that goodness there is of the same essence exactly as goodness here,—if this can be made known to us, are we not strong? Is there not in us then the power of martyrdom? Is not ridicule robbed of its sting? Is not our little, dusty struggle dignified and glorified when it is seen to be a true effort of loyalty to the same great Master who "preserves the stars from wrong," and by whom the eternal heavens "are fresh and strong"? Do we not fight

with new courage against our Sisera when we know, as Deborah sang in her great song, that the stars in their courses are fighting against him, too?

Can we know that? Can we be sure of such a pervasive morality filling the universe like a life-blood? or is this which I have been saying only a splendid theory? I am not sure that there is not something in the very moral sense itself, which, to one who is truly in its power, proclaims its universality,—some intuition which makes the struggler after goodness anywhere absolutely sure that there can be no most transcendental land wherein that same struggle is not going on. How that may be, I do not know. But the real assurance that the universe is all pervaded by morality comes to us, I believe, not from that intuition, but from the belief in God, and therefore has its full strength only when the belief in God is fully strong. This is one of the many ways in which religion and morality are bound together. God fills the universe with Himself, and is the principle of its life; and God is essentially and necessarily moral. Therefore no part of the universe which He thus fills with Himself can be unmoral. Right and wrong must be the critical distinction everywhere, because He is everywhere and everything is His. That is the argument. It rests on the identity of God and the essentialness of the moral element in His nature.

I can conceive of there being regions which God governs, to which He has not made known truths which He has shown to us. There may be realms in His dominion which know nothing of some

manifestations of His power with which we are most familiar. But that God should be the God of any farthest star which carries inhabitants capable of morality, of any highest heaven or deepest hell; and yet, that those distant regions know nothing of the difference of right and wrong—that is incredible! "Thus saith the Lord, 'The Heaven is my throne and the earth is my foostool.'" Throne and footstool are full of the nature of the one same God. It cannot be that the throne is ignorant of that power of His Presence which gives to the footstool its deepest and highest glory.

Just think what meaning this truth gives to the Incarnation, to the visible coming of God into the world in Jesus Christ. Out of a heaven all full of the power of morality, a heaven where the right is supremely glorious, and the wrong is supremely horrible, the God in whom that morality of the heavens consists comes forth into our earth, where the same morality, the same distinction of right and wrong exist, but far more feebly, more cloudily and dimly. "What illumination will follow wherever He shall go!" we say. "How, as He treads the earth, goodness the most despised will lift its humble head, and wickedness, however splendid, will cower and shrivel!" It will be—to return a moment to our illustration—it will be as if the citizen of civilized Europe went with his Christian standards to Madagascar and walked among the savages. The souls that dreamed of progress and of holiness will know him and be strong. The brutal and barbarian tyrants will be ashamed through all their brutality.

And think what will be the joy of him who brings the illumination. I love to think of the self-consciousness of Christ. How radiantly full of joy it must have been! Even although the torch which He brings must be held up at last upon a cross, what then? The joy of making the universe of His Father more perfect in its harmony, the joy of making earth hear and respond to the righteousness of heaven, what is the suffering of the cross to that! Oh, if any of us could only be Christ, it would be so easy for us to die like Christ! The cross did not increase, but only manifested His Divinity.

This truth does not exhaust our subject. I do not doubt for a moment that there are more active ministries which the righteousness of heaven renders to the truth of earth than those which belong simply to its existence, those which result necessarily from the fact that the worlds of unseen life are moral. I do not doubt, though no man ever can reduce it to an exact science and tell its methods and its laws,— I do not doubt that there is ever flowing out a great active influence from all the worlds in which righteousness is established as the law of life, to help this poor world of ours, and to help every soul in it that is trying to be good. We are so slow to think that there are any ways in which soul may help soul, besides the few poor ways we know! We limit help to sight and sound and touch. Who can say, who can believe, that it is not possible for every righteous soul in heaven to help every soul striving for righteousness here on earth, with a help just as true, though unseen and unheard, as that with

which a strong man lifts a weak man who has fallen in the ditch, or a wise man guides a foolish man with a whisper in his ear? It can be so. No man can say it is impossible. In highest moods we feel their presence with a sense deeper than the senses. The spirits of the universe are helping us; and most of all, the Spirit of God, in whom the universe abides and is forever righteous and forever one.

In such active ministry of the unseen worlds to the earth in which we live, I do indeed believe. But now, I would go back and fasten your remembrance on that of which I have been mostly speaking: The universe is moral. Even in their mere passive character and being, the unseen worlds are full of help for every righteous soul. Tell me, my friends, is not this a truth for you to teach your children, something for you to give them very early, so that they may live by it all their lives? They ask you, perhaps in curious words, perhaps only in the inquiry of wondering faces and of actions which are evidently feeling about for their best motives, why they should do right. You try to answer them. You point them first, no doubt, to their own natures. It is written there that right is right, and wrong is wrong, and that to do the right and not the wrong is the only possible true life for them. That is absolute. That would abide even if there were no other moral being in all the wide universe except this child of yours.

But the child is not the only moral being. You tell him about God, that his Heavenly Father wants him to be righteous, that He will be displeased and

sorry if His child is wicked. That would be true if he and God were all alone, if there were no other moral being in the universe but just those two. But there are others, and so you go on and tell him how all the best men whom he knows are struggling against temptation just as you bid him struggle. Then you enlarge the field. You give him books to read, or you take him travelling from land to land, and point out to him that this moral struggle is not a thing of his country or race alone, but is wherever man is throughout the wide world. Then, wider still, you lift the veil of History and show him that all the noble souls in all the ages were moral, too, all elder brethren of his in this desire to be good. You make yourself a prophet, and assure him that, however man may change in future ages, still, until man ceases to be man, this search for character must be the endless aspiration of his race. Then you take his hand and lead him out of the world of man into the world of lower nature; and even there you let him see how a blind craving for something which corresponds to righteousness in man is visible, a struggle to obey its law and to fulfil its purpose even in beast and weed. All this you do to make him brave and strong.

Have you done all you can? Suppose that then you can open some inner eye in himself, so that the universe of unseen worlds shall all be visibly alive with this same struggle; suppose that you can unstop some inner ear so that out of the farthest depths of space shall be heard the universal voice praising righteousness as the great, the only worthy

and sufficient, end of being;—have you not filled him with a strength which never can fail, a strength which will come pouring in to aid him in many a weak moment and lift him out of many a despondent slough? It is the strength of infinite companionships. His smallest act of duty is done in company, not only with Paul and Plato, but with natures whose names he cannot guess, who fill the depths of space and the sublimest heights of heaven. The breath of eternal sympathy will lift his dull resolution as the winds out of the farthest north or south lay themselves under the ship's sluggish sails and urge it on its way.

Three of the greatest embarrassments which come to a man who, in public or in private life, in the great worlds of government or men or in the little world of his own soul, sets out to struggle after righteousness are these: the sense of loneliness, the sense of unnaturalness, and the sense of hopelessness. It seems to him sometimes as if he works alone, as if the whole world around him cared nothing for that on which his heart is set. It seems sometimes as if the nature of things sets the other way, and as if, in everlastingly resisting his own passions and the currents of established life, he were doing something against nature, something which is almost monstrous. And then these two impressions combine to make a dull sense of despair, in which he labors on, perhaps, but without buoyancy or hope. Do you not see how it must go far to dissipate these embarrassments if, on his struggles after goodness, righteousness shall look down from heaven? Lo!

he is not alone! The universe is with him. Lo! what he does is not unnatural. The truest nature of things is all upon his side. It is sin that is unnatural, not goodness; and success, so far from being hopeless, is absolutely sure, the surest thing in the universe of God.

This is what you are to teach your child; this is what you are to hold fast to for yourself—the sympathy and companionship of the unseen worlds. No doubt it is best for us now that they should be unseen. It cultivates in us that higher perception which we call "faith," which is as truly perception as is the sight of the eyes. But who can say that the time will not come when, even to those who still live here upon the earth, the unseen worlds shall no longer be unseen? In all times there have been men who, at special moments, have seemed to see beyond the ordinary bounds of sense, and actually with their eyes to behold the forms of beings who belonged not to the earth but to the heavens. Who can say that some day, centuries off, when the old world shall be far older still, and shall have been purified by vastly more of pain and labor, it may not be given to men to see those beings of other worlds than ours who, even now, are round us, and who, we know, are living and seeking the same righteousness with us?

How that may be we cannot know. But certainly our thoughts on this subject ought to have thrown some light forward into the great mystery of death. It ought to let us see in death all the light we really need to see, for if all that I have said is true, then

must it not also be true that the man who has striven after goodness here, and at last, after his years of striving which so often seemed to be lonely and hopeless, dies,—is it not true that he goes into a companionship and a certainty which has been preparing for him all his life? The spirit passes into other worlds, and lo! the faces which he meets upon the shore are not strange but familiar. He knows the passion in those eyes. He understands the resolution of those ardent lips. It is his own eagerness for goodness which he finds here in the heaven, out of which for years he has dimly felt it looking down. Death has brought him to his own.

The universe is large, far larger than we think, but there is no portion of it so far away, so splendid or mysterious, that it does not send us messages bidding us and helping us to be pure and brave and true and faithful in these common tasks and simple duties which God has appointed for us on the earth.

XX.

WORK AND REST.

"Man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening."—PSALM civ. 23.

WE all suspect, far more than we know, how the beauty and significance of the most familiar things is hidden from us by their familiarity. If we could only see for the first time what we see for the ten thousandth, it would be so different to us! We are sure that we should really see it then. And one of the most significant of things, certainly, if we could see it in such freshness, would be the constant alternation of day and night in the natural world, with its suggestion—and indeed its requirement—of a corresponding alternation of work and rest, of occupation and leisure, in the life of man. But age after age, the days have gone on shining through their golden hours, and then sinking into the coolness and dark of the evenings; and generation after generation of mankind has had the characters of all its men and women shaped and colored by this perpetual ministration of nature, this mixture of labor and repose. Though men have become so possessed with the passion of work that, if they could, they would have had a never-setting sun, though they grudged

the hours of rest as if they were hours of waste, the sun has had no consideration for their extravagances; but when the working hours were over it has shut down its gate of darkness and turned the overzealous mechanic out of his workshop, and the overzealous farmer out of his field, and has compelled each of them to rest in spite of himself.

On the other hand, men have grown tired of work and loved overmuch the dark and quiet hours in which they could give themselves to contemplation; but once a day always the sunlight has broken in upon their dreams, and the stir and current of a world springing to work in every part of it has dragged them to the labor that was better for them. Nature is so healthy! such a wise mother of us all! With her quiet, persistent hands she is always pressing on each man's morbidness, and urging it back to health. Our modern civilization invents its gaslights and its tireless machineries and tries to turn night, both for its pleasure and its labor, into day. And then comes the opposition, the protest of laboring people insisting that eight hours or ten hours are enough to work. But, after all, however men may fix their exact rules and regulations, it is nature and the God of nature, it is the Maker of light and darkness who has finally decreed the general proportions of toil and rest—that man shall go forth to his work and to his labor until the evening, and then come home to his repose.

Our subject, then, is Work and Rest and their relations to each other, which are thus typified and secured by the perpetual dispensation of the natural

world. I am sure that every thoughtful man will have suspected at least that there is nothing that has had a stronger influence in bringing his character to be what it is, than the proportions and relations which work and rest have had to each other through the course of his life; and as he surveys the people about him he sees hardly any cause that has contributed so much to make the differences among men who may be considered to have started pretty much alike, as this same thing—the different proportions of labor and leisure in their lives. If this is true, then these two parts of life and their relation to each other must be well worth our study.

And let us speak first of work, the daytime labor of men, that by which they get their living. The strangest thing about work is the way in which all men praise it, and yet all men try to get away from it. There is no subject so popular as the blessedness of work. There is no theory so universal as that of the wretchedness of not being compelled to work. You may tell any audience that the worst legacy a father can leave to his child is the opportunity of idleness, and all your audience, rich and poor, workers and idlers together, will applaud. There is no live man who does not feel a certain excited sense of admiration, a certain satisfaction, a certain comfort that things are right, when he stands where men are working their hardest, where trade is roaring or the great hammers are deafening you as they clang upon the iron. Everywhere, work and the approval of work! and yet everywhere the desire to get away from work! Everywhere, what all these

men we see are toiling for, is to make such an accumulation of money that they shall not have to toil any longer. Everywhere, while the laboring man has his contempt for, he has also his envy of, his brother man who owns the easy fortune and lives the easy life. The dream of his own heart is to reach that same privilege for himself.

Now, this double sense, this value of work and impatience with work as they exist together, seems to me to be the crude expression in men's minds of this conviction,—that work is good, that men degenerate and rust without it, and yet that work is only at its best and brings its best results, is most honorable and most useful, when it is aiming at something beyond itself. This is the feeling which lies at the bottom of all men's endeavors to escape from the labor which yet they know and will maintain to be honorable and beautiful,—the feeling that every work ought not to be satisfied with mere continuance, but ought to seek some attainment, ought not to expect merely to go on forever, but ought to expect to go out sometime into a rest and repose in which its true excellence should be attested. And everybody will bear witness that this is the healthiest feeling about any work that we have to do; satisfaction and pleasure in doing it, but expectation of having it done some day and graduating from it into some higher state which we think of as rest. Take the first of these away, and work becomes feverish and discontented. Take the second away, and it becomes dull and deadening.

The real pleasure that legitimately belongs to the

doing of work (a pleasure which it would be sad to think that any of us whose lot in life it is to labor in any way did not often feel as we plod on about our business) — this pleasure is capable of being analyzed into various elements. I will mention three, which, though we may not have given them our thought, must have often helped and lightened the doing of our work. The first is the pleasure of the mere exercise of our powers. It is a noble thing. I do not know where there is any broad, patent fact which makes us more realize that Love, somewhere, in some heart, had something to do with the putting together of this life of ours, than the great fact that whatever a man is made to do, he primarily does with pleasure. Other things may come in that make him hate to do it, but he starts out with this, that the power being in him, it is a joy to him to send it out into action. And it is wonderful how many mighty and exceptional achievements there are, and how much of the even, steady flow of action there is, of which it is really impossible to give any other account than this, that it is a pleasure to human nature to exercise any power of which it feels itself possessed. There are plenty of merchants who are working hard every day, not to make money, for they have enough, but because there is in them a business faculty which it is a pleasure for them to exercise, just as it is a pleasure for a fish to swim, or for a bird to fly, or for a child to run with the vitality that he feels in every limb, or for an artist to paint with the skill that he feels in his active brain and his subtle fingers.

There are men at Washington and at our State House whose pleasure in governing is purely in the use of the governing capacity of which they are conscious. In our war, as in every war, there were soldiers who went to the field not for the cause, but for simple joy in doing what they knew they could do—that is, to fight and perhaps command. There is an impatience in an unused power. It is cramped and distressed and inflamed within us. It is a joy to exercise a power or a talent. It is not the highest or most reasonable joy, but how deep and universal it is! how it springs up instinctively! There is a healthy pleasure in doing what each power that God has given us was made by Him to do.

But this is not all. One must see or believe that there are results of his work; or it is not in any reasonable man to take permanent pleasure in doing it. And there comes in the second element in the attractiveness of work. It may seem at first as if there were very little for us to gather up here. It may seem that much of our work went by and manifested no results, so few special and prominent things there are to which, after we have worked for our twenty, or thirty, or forty years, we can point confidently and declare that but for us they would not have been.

And yet, I am sure, there are two convictions that grow in the mind of every watchful man as he gets older: first, that the amount of effect that has been produced in the world by men's work has been enormous, the face of nature enormously altered, and the condition of humanity enormously changed;

and, secondly, that this enormous effect has really been produced not by the great efforts of a few great toilers, but by the continuous, innumerable labors of innumerable little workers just like himself. This seems to me to be the source from which a common man is really able to believe that his work does something, and so to take pleasure in his little labor because of its indubitable results. The coral insect sees the great reef breasting the sea, which millions of little creatures, with no greater gift of size than he, have built; and so he creeps up and lays his stiffening frame upon the pile, sure that even such a bulk as his will not be lost. The worker in some branch of charity sees that the great condition of the human race has risen on the whole; whole ledges of humanity that used to be under the water now stand out in the sun; and he sees that it has not been done by one or two giants giving one or two great lifts, but by the constant help of insignificant man by insignificant man all through the centuries; and so he knows that he is doing something when he lays down his life or some part of his life for his brethren—something that will show, although he shall not see it; something that will tell, although he shall not hear it. Sometimes we feel how little men have done in the world; but oftener we feel how much they have done, and rejoice in adding our grain of sand to the great pile that is forever building.

The third element of reasonable pleasure in work is the change and advance which it brings in our knowledge of ourselves, and in our own characters.

If there were not something of this kind, I do not think any reasonable man could go on working day after day and be contented. Work would grow stale and disgusting. Merely to exercise powers that remained the same after the thousandth exercise that they were after the first; and merely to produce results like a machine that is no more perfect when its millionth nail is added to the heap than when it dropped its second or its third;—neither of those could satisfy the man conscious of a character, conscious of himself. It is in the blessed power of work to make a man first know himself, and then grow beyond himself, that its great attractiveness for all the best sort of men must lie. I go to work proud and confident; I find how weak I am and I grow humble. That is itself, or ought to be, a joy. The new joy of humility—alas, for the man who never tasted it! It is a coming home to facts. It is a getting rid of delusions. I have found the blessed strong footing of humility. I have got the hard, barren rocks away, and have got down to the soft rich ground in which good seed can grow. It is rare to see a really working man who is proud, and rare to see a really idle man who is not proud. And I am not theorizing. I am only speaking the truth of multitudes of experiences when I say that for a real man there is no joy in life so great as getting rid of the false conceits, concealments, and necessities of pride and coming down to the frank, solid, free ground of humility.

These, then, are the legitimate sources of pleasure in work. I do not say that these are what make all

men work, and keep them from idleness. Lower compulsions come in. In a community like ours the two first things that keep men at their labor are necessity and shame. Men cannot afford to be idle where wealth so easily changes hands, and where no one will give them a living which they do not earn for themselves. And men have not the face to be idle where this universal necessity has established a universal esteem for work. I do not despise either of these compulsions. Better that any idle hands among us should be set to toil by necessity or shame than that they should lie always in the lap; but if your work is to be anything more than a task to you, somewhere or other these three things must come in to lift it: It must really call out your powers; you must be able really to think of it as effective and useful, and you must see out of it some fruit of humility and character in yourself.

I am glad to preach to a congregation of men who work; I should not know how to preach to any others. Every morning your house doors open to let you out either from the luxury or from the poverty of your home, into a day of labor. Every morning these men refresh the old experience of David's Psalm and with light heart or heavy, with joy in it or hate of it, "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labor." It makes one's heart almost ache as he thinks back how long this has been going on. It seems as if it were terrible that so many hundreds of thousands of millions of men have lived and worked; and yet we, coming onto the earth at this late day, have rushed in at once, with the old

instinct grown strong with hereditation and never relaxed necessity, have scrambled among the graves of our fathers for the tools they dropped beside them as they stepped down wearily into them, and have gone to work as freshly as if we were the first generation that ever discovered what a grand working place this old world is! It is terrible to think of all this if we remember what multitudes of those workers hated the work they did, loathed it, and were crushed by it, got neither pleasure nor culture out of it, and died killed by their work in soul as well as body. "Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I took under the sun,"—so wrote the despairing soul in the Ecclesiastes, and many another despondent heart has taken up his dreary words.

But yet, if we are right, if work has in it these sources of joy, real, pure, untainted with anything of evil, then the terror of it is gone for any worker that can truly find these fountains. Then we are not entering into an entailed curse of our fathers when we come out and find work waiting for us just as soon as our hands are big enough to hold the instruments of labor; we are rather coming into a garden of blessing, broad, open, rich, which was stocked with all culture for them, and is now offering its pleasures freely to us their children. The sky with tireless benevolence, and the ground with patient welcome, see us coming so late with the same old monotonous demands, and are as cordial in their greeting and as kindly in their care for us as they were to Adam and Seth and Enoch, and the

others who came to them when they were fresh and young.

I wish that I could make the young men whose lot it is to be workers know and believe that work is not necessarily pleasant nor necessarily drudgery. Your work has in it great, deep, inexhaustible sources of delight, if it is capable of giving broad play to your good human powers, and of leading to some true solid results, and of making you humble. Distrust no work because men call it "low"; but distrust any work, however high men call it, that will not do these three things for you. Distrust and dread any work which cramps instead of letting out your faculties, or which brings out your meanest faculties and leaves your noblest ones untouched, or any work which you are sure can add nothing to the sum of good in the world. It is not the size but the solidity of the contribution that you must look to; a single grain of sand is as solid as a mountain. Distrust also any work the doing of which makes you proud, and so, blinding you to yourself, makes you weak. A pleasure in using our powers, a belief in results, and a growing humility,—these are the sanctifications and salvations of work, and may make the life of the hod-carrier or the street-sweeper bright and elevating.

These are our thoughts of work and of its privileges. And now, as we look around upon the world we live in, we see how all of nature is built to cooperate with these great purposes of labor, and to bring out the pleasure which legitimately belongs to every act of faithful work. The delight in the

sheer exercise of powers finds sympathy in every attempt of nature, by her resistances and discouragements, to bring those powers out to their fullest. The desire to produce results is helped by a ready nature always ready to submit to and be acted upon by man. And the self-culture of work is aided by every rebuke with which nature convinces the working man of his limitations and his littleness. This outer world, with all its helps and hindrances, is saying to man, "Work, for there is happiness and growth in working. It is good. It is what you are here for. I will help you. For this the daily sunlight rises in the east and shines through all its course."

But now we come to the other part of our subject. If we look to the arrangements of Nature for indications of what man's life is meant to be, we see at once that, bravely as she has provided for his work, she has not thought of him only as a working being. She has set her morning sun in the sky to tempt—nay, to summon him forth to his work and to his labor, to make him ashamed of himself if he loiters and shirks at home; but she has limited her daylight, she has given her sun only his appointed hours, and the labor and work are always to be only "until the evening." Rest as truly as work is written in her constitution. Rest, then, as much as work is an element of life. By his rest as well as by his work every man may be estimated and judged. Indeed, it seems as if a man could be judged better by his resting than by his working hours. He is less artificial and more spontaneous then, and his character

has freer play. Who of us does not feel that he would know more of a man's real character, of the true personal qualities that are in him, if he knew how he spent his evenings than even if he knew wholly how he was occupied during his days?

If we pass, then, from talking about work to speak of the Divinely appointed, the naturally recurring periods of rest in a man's life, we must try to estimate their value not to the body but to the mind and soul. We want to think not of night as the time of sleep, but of evening as the time of leisure. And here, too, let me make three suggestions of the value of rest as I did of the value of work. And, first, this daily drawing of the curtain between man and his active labors represents and continually reminds us of the need of the internal as well as the external in our lives. It brings up to us our need, by bringing up to us our opportunity, of meditation, of contemplation. For active life is always tending to get shallow. It is always forgetting its motives, forgetting its principles, forgetting what it is so busy for, and settling itself into superficial habits. Do we not know that, every one of us? No work is so sacred that it can escape the danger. Buying and selling, legislating, doctoring, preaching, teaching,—they are all occupations which are capable of being done only from the muscles outward. And just as God was always taking those Hebrews of His, after they had been tossed and beaten about in a great war, full of wild, absorbing activity, and putting His hand upon them as it were, and hushing their history into one of those calm evening periods

of which we read in the frequently recurring phrase, "the land had rest forty years"; just as He took his chief saints, Moses, Elijah, Paul—nay, just as Jesus Christ went out of activity into silence and quiet and retirement; so God shuts us out from our work and bids us daily think what the heart of our work is, what we are doing it for. If this is the meaning of the evening—and no man sees the daylight sink away and the shadows gather without sensitively feeling some such meaning in it—then surely we need it.

It sometimes seems as if, if the whole world could stop one hour, and sit still and think what it is about, it could start off again so much more wisely. There is so much unreasonable work doing. There are so few of us who ever do really meditate, who ever contemplate the spiritual reasons and consequences of the things that we are doing! We put that off until we get to heaven, which we idly picture to ourselves as a place of endless leisure. We will not use the calm and peace, the daily heaven, which God has scattered into all our days. We light the gas and kill the evening by making believe that it is daylight still.

This we do far too much, and yet we all do meditate a little; and it is hard to see how we could ever do it at all if life were one broad glare of sunlight, never sinking into the dusk where one can not see to work and must gather himself together, "recollect," as we say, his scattered life, and look with his spirit at the hearts and souls of those things whose outsides his hands have been handling all the day.

The value of the evening comes, of course, from its relation to the daylight. The worth of meditation depends upon its connection with activity. A world all evening would be bad and morbid. The life that tries to be all contemplative grows feeble and shallow in its own way. Nature has taught us our true culture when she has bound the periods of action and the periods of contemplation close to each other, and bidden us complete our life out of the two together. And the man surely suffers who despises either.

And then again, the presence of the evening, or the element of leisure in our lives, not merely offsets our working time with a time of thought and contemplation, but it also mitigates, even in our working hours, the absoluteness with which our work tries to rule us. I am sure you business men will own that there is danger of a man's being too much and too purely a business man. I am sure that here, in our city, where we have been and are still blessed with the example and influence of so many merchants, who, while they have been "not slothful in business," have been "fervent in spirit"; who have had, that is, burning in their own bosoms and have lighted in the lives of others, ardent and glowing interest in spiritual things—in art, in education, in literature, in philanthropy, and in religion —I am sure that here I may claim and you will allow that, for every active business man's best good it is desirable, it is necessary, that he should have some intellectual or spiritual sympathy outside of his business, which shall be the resource of his life,

where he can go for the water of refreshment and life that will keep him from stiffening into a machine.

I am sure that we can all see the difference between the men who have and the men who have not such an interest to resort to; we feel it the moment that we touch their different lives. The one life is hard and hollow; the other is soft, elastic, and full. The old Jews used to have (and I do not know but they have still) a rule that, however intellectual or spiritual a child's life might be destined to become, he should be taught some self-supporting trade, so that, however it fared with the soul, the body might not starve. It was a good rule certainly. But the other rule would be good, too, if it could be observed,—that, however material a child's life was to be, it should be inspired with some definite spiritual or intellectual interest, so that, however it might fare with the body, the spirit should not starve. There is nothing one would want to urge more strongly on young men just being swept into the intense absorption of mercantile life than the necessity of winning and keeping some resource, some place of mental resort, some interest or study or liberal occupation of some sort, to which his tired life may always resort to find refreshment and recruit its spring. This is the evening element in life. There are multitudes of merchants who have turned to drudges, and drudged along in a work that was a slavery to them, just for the lack of some such resort, some interest outside of their business, to which they could retire.

To multitudes of people Religion has been just

this haven of retreat, where the soul put in out of the storms of life for shelter and repair. Nobody can begin to estimate how much, to our New England ancestors,—hard-worked, poor, forced down to continual contact with the most prosaic and hard details,— has been the religion which has always filled their lives with softer influence, and renewed their courage, and kept the better part of them alive. Think of the village and farm life of our bleak coast and hills—what would it have been without the softening and elevating and recruiting, the letting up of work and letting-in of visions, that came from the meeting-house upon the hill, and the Bible reading and the prayer and the psalm-singing beside the cottage hearth? We may forget much that was in their creed, we may learn more broad and genial ways of worshipping and thinking, but woe to us if we shut up and forget that door which they kept open from the life of man into the life of God! Woe to us if we let our work lose the inspiration that comes from knowing that we do it for our Heavenly Father, and not for ourselves! We stand in danger of letting that knowledge go, because work so absorbs us and enchains us by its own sheer power; but yet we know that that slavery to work, which we are aware is growing in ourselves, is not the highest or most noble type of life as we behold it in other men. We know that the man to whom work is really sanctifying and helpful, is the man who has God behind his work; who is able to retire out of the fret and hurry of his work into the calmness and peace of Deity, and come out again

into his labor full of the exalted certainties of the Redemption of Christ and the Love of God; to make work sweet and fresh and interesting and spiritual by doing it not for himself, nor for itself, but for the Saviour in whom he lives. This is the work that "drinks of the brook in the way," and lifts up its head under any heat and against any wind.

There is one other recollection which it is most necessary for men to keep in mind, but which it is hard to see how men could keep except under some sort of arrangement like that in which we live. It is hard to see how, were it not for the continually repeated, daily stoppages of work, we could remember, as we need to remember, the great close of work which is coming to every one of us, and may be very near. I picture to myself a world without an evening, a world with an unsetting daylight, a sun with a lidless eye, and with men who never tired at their tasks; and it seems as if death in a world like that, the snatching of this man or that man out of the ranks of the unintermitted labor, would be so much more terrible and mysterious than it is now; when once a day, for many years, we have learned that work was not meant to last always, and have had to drop our tools as if in practice and rehearsal for the great darkness when we are to let them go forever. How constant this suggestion has been everybody knows. We are sure that it would have come into our own minds, if no one had ever hinted it, if we had never sung the hymn in which it is embodied:

The day is past and gone ;
The evening shades appear ;
Oh, may we all remember well,
The night of death draws near.

So once a day our hold on work is loosened, and the great setting-free which is to come is prophesied, and its power is anticipated to us.

Some may wonder whether that is a good thing for us. I think a great many people honestly doubt whether it is a good thing for men, while they are alive, to remember that they have got to die. And with the cruel, dark, false thoughts of death which are so plentiful, which many minds cling to as the most religious thoughts, certainly it would be better for men not to think of death at all. Such thoughts must paralyze them. Better, far better, that they should go on and do their work bravely, as if they never were to die, than to be so frightened with the inevitableness of dying that work should seem to be waste, and the hands should drop idle.

But if a man can think rightly, can think like a Christian about death, can think about it as the going home of the scholar who has been off at school, as the setting free of the partial activity into some intense and extensive exercise which it is glorious while it is bewildering to think of; then the more a man thinks about death the better. He will do his work all the more faithfully for every look that he takes through that gate which is iron on the outer side and golden on the inner. Let me merely point out, before I close, two or three of the ways in which it will make a man more faithful in his work

to remember that he is going to die, if he can remember it like a Christian.

In the first place, it will help him to anticipate already the judgments of death and eternity. I know, you know, that we are all thinking things about our fellow-men, which we never can think of them when the mere disguises of this life have passed away. We are slighting poor men for their poverty; we are honoring rich men for their wealth; we are praising bad men for their smartness; we are holding back our applause from men we know are good, because they are unpopular; we are valuing men for little useful knacks and tricks that they possess, and not for the honesty, the truthfulness, the purity of their hearts. We know that these judgments of ours are temporary and false; we know that, when we come to die, we shall see the beauty that is in some rough shell which we slight now, and the baseness that is in some pleasant form to which we cringe and fawn. If we saw death coming, it would change our judgments. I am sure that, if we really felt now that we were going to die, we should be braver and more independent. There is a sublime freedom in death. What does the dying man care for the tyrannies of gossip and conventionality that have ruled him for his threescore years? Their chains drop off him the moment he hears the great call. And if we really could live in the anticipation of that time of freedom, we might be freer and braver now. To some people it seems as if it must be dreadful to think much of death, because death is such a mournful thing. But there have been deaths

that have been as triumphant and jubilant as the blowing of trumpets, and other deaths that have been serene as the opening of a flower; and if it will help to make our death like either of these to look at it and remember that it is coming, then the more every evening, which is a day's death, can bring it up to us, the better.

And again, the remembrance that we are to die some day, by and by, must help us to keep the spiritual part of our occupation real and valuable before us always. Our occupation, whatever it is, is like ourselves, inward and outward. It has its body and its soul. Now, to remember that the time is coming (and may come to-morrow) when the soul in us is to be everything, to see as it comes up towards us the day that is to break the power of the form over the spirit, the day when, not the form, but the purpose and the power of our work, is to go with us into Eternity,—that must weaken a little the bondage that the visible has over us, must let us know something of the sublime spirituality with which St. Paul said, "I look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

And yet, finally, the very fact that the form of our work is so shortly to be left behind has, strangely enough, another effect upon us,—to make us all the more earnest to deal with it faithfully while it remains. We value the spirit of our occupation because that is to go on with us forever; we value its form because our time to work on it is short. This

last is the meaning of those golden words of Christ. "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is called to-day; for the night cometh in which no man can work." An earnest faithfulness to our tasks, and a complete superiority to our tasks,—these two seem to me to blend only in the character of the man who lives in the sight of death and of eternity, the man who works all the day, knowing that the evening is coming.

We want to work every day so that we can rest; for work and rest belong together. We want to gather, out of every active service of God, deep thoughts of Him for our hours of contemplation. We want to come to self-knowledge by well-proportioned labor and retirement. And then, as the day of life grows dark, and the light fades in the east and gathers in the west, we want to go from time into eternity without a fear or a regret; but with hearts full of memories and hopes, full of expectation of the new service which our Lord has for us to do on the other side of the darkness, where we shall see Him face to face.

XXI.

NEW WINE IN NEW BOTTLES.

"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."—MATTHEW ix. 17.

IT is the first Sunday of a new year, and there are none of us, I think, who are not feeling something of that sense of newness and freshness which belongs to such a time. It is a strange and universal thing—this constant desire of men to make a fresh start. They create epochs, or starting moments; and those which nature and time furnish, such as the dawn of a new day or the birth of a new year, are eagerly seized upon to mark a new beginning, to separate old failures or old partial successes from the completer success which we never get tired of expecting in the future. What would life be without its nights to rub the blurred slate clean, and its returning mornings, each bringing the fresh spring and vigor and hopefulness almost of a new creation? This pleasure in a fresh start comes partly from man's disappointment in his past, and partly from the way in which every best satisfaction of the past has always suggested another satisfaction completer

than itself, to which it has spurred on his hopes. And so it belongs not to one class of minds or experiences alone; but all men, the despondent and the sanguine, those who have failed and those who have succeeded, are glad of the opportunity to start again; and so the New Year's dawn is welcome to us all.

The world has learned to date its years from the coming of Jesus Christ. Then, it seems to us, many things became new; as if the great caravan of humanity, which had been toiling on for centuries in one direction, having rested itself, as it were, in the stagnation of the century that preceded Him, started anew; and ever since has moved in new directions, on a march of which He seems to be everywhere the Leader. As we look back to His time, we can see many signs that some sense of this newness, which His life had brought, was in the minds of men who felt His influence. There are clusters of figures which seem to be always representing this idea: an axe laid to the root of a tree, that it may come down and a sounder one grow in its place; a leaven that has entered into a dead, heavy mass, and made it stir with life; an absent householder that has come to live on his estate; and finally, a new vintage just brought in from the wine-press, full of the ferment of its new, tumultuous life. It is this last figure which Christ is using in our text. As He thinks of His own new influence, He is compelled to think also how it will adapt itself to the old ways and thoughts and habits which it finds. To put this new life into the old world seems to be like taking

one of the half-tanned skins in which the people used to carry their wine—one that had been used before, an old one, dry and cracked and rotten—and filling it with the exuberant and boisterous spirit fresh from the vine. "The bottle breaks and the wine runneth out." The old will not hold the new. The Jewish conceptions of life, hard, arid, rotten, cannot contain the new fiery inspirations and ways of living which He brings.

It is not necessary now to go more fully into Christ's first application of His figure. Enough for us at present that it contains this idea: that what is new and strong and fiery must have something solid and strong to hold it. This is the truth which we need to-day. The New Year's time is full of resolutions. I should be sorry indeed to look over such a congregation as this, gathered on the first Sunday of a New Year, and not believe that there were many people here who had resolved on better lives, and taken up new ways of living for this new opening period of their life. To give up some old wasteful, foolish, wicked habit; to face and wrestle with some old persistent sin; to take up some known duty that has been long neglected; to draw away from some companionship which we know is harming us; to make amends for some injury and reclaim some friend whom we have wronged and lost;—these are the resolutions of which the air is full. How many of us have made them in the silence of the first night, or the bustle of the first day, of a New Year! And with them all there has been a deep misgiving lest they should all be broken—so many

have been made before, at other New Year's times, and not been kept! You cannot have been very thoughtful in your resolving unless you have asked yourselves with some anxiety, "What is the trouble? Why are so many strong, good resolutions scattered and lost?" I want, if I can, to help you to the answer to that question. The difficulty comes in great part, I am sure, from the absence of any large, comprehensive plan of life, as strong as, and as worthy of, the resolutions and habits of life which we want to keep in it. It is the lack of a bottle fresh and strong enough to hold the wine. This is the idea to which I most earnestly ask your attention.

For every life has two parts, is capable of being looked at in two different ways. It has its general idea or purpose, and its special habits. In every life there are its particular employments; the things which the man or woman does from morning to night on all the successive days; the occupations that employ his hands, the thoughts that occupy his mind, the habits of his daily living. And then, around them all, holding them all into some kind of unity, giving them all its spirit and really making a unit of living out of what otherwise would be a mere series of disjoined actions, there is the plan of life,—what, on the whole, the man or woman means to be, the purpose which runs through all the days binding them all together. And, however it may seem to us, every life has both of these; the general purpose and the special habits. It is not confined to those who are conscious of it, who have deliberately made for themselves a plan by which they live.

We think about St. Paul. We are sure that he had thought out with himself what life was for. A great, pervading purpose held it all together. "To me, to live is Christ," he said; and every act he did, every thought that his mind dwelt upon, came out from and returned into that comprehensive scheme—the realizations of Christ in himself and in the world. But just as real, though not as clearly realized, there is a plan of life in a poor creature of our town, who, cursed and satisfied with wealth, is merely trying to put into every hour of his useless days some occupation which shall bring that hour pleasantly on to its death. As truly as the glory of Christ comprehended all the activity of Paul, so his own amusement, his own pleasure, embrace all of this man's life. There is not one of us who, whether he keeps it out of sight and never owns it to himself, or holds it up before him for continual inspiration, has not a ruling purpose, a comprehensive thought of his existence within which everything that he does is enclosed and finds its place.

How various they are, these plans or ideas of life! One man's is social ambition, another man's is political success. One man lives that he may become learned, another man lives that he may be thought learned, another man that his children may prosper, another man that his country may be magnified, another man that his soul may be saved. Around all the acts that each one of us does is wrapped a reason for which we do them all,—a great enveloping purpose in or conception of the whole of life.

And there is a certain relationship between the

general purpose and the special acts of life. There is a constant tendency for them to come into and to keep in harmony. The general plan, as the most constant element, is always trying to draw the special actions into its own likeness. Life is in disturbance when the two are out of harmony. Life is at peace only when the two completely coincide, only when each special action tends to fulfil the general purpose for which the man is living. Otherwise there is disturbance and unrest.

Now, the truth which is presented by the figure of our text is this: that the special habits of a man's life cannot be effectively changed and made new while he keeps the old general purpose or plan of life to which his old habits were adapted. You cannot put new wine into old bottles. You must have new bottles for your new wine. A man says to himself —perhaps on New Year's day, perhaps at some other time when life seems to him solemn and his conscience is awakened—"I will change this habit"; "I will give up this wickedness"; "I will take up this duty." He says it to himself and he says it before God. How is it that so soon that resolution, earnestly, seriously made, has melted away and been lost? Is it not that it came, a single, unsupported, uncongenial thing, into a life with which it had no true belonging? The general plan of the life was not altered. It remained what it had always been,—as frivolous, as worldly, as unconscientious; and this new act of goodness found itself alone. It was not part of any consistent whole; and, unsupported, unaccounted for, by and by it fell away and died.

It made disturbance and confusion in the life where it did not belong.

It is like an artist who is painting a picture. His outline is all drawn. The great conception of the whole stands out on canvas. And then a change of mood makes him want to change some detail of his painting to something wholly different. He does it, but there is no adaptation of his general design to this new alteration; and, in a scheme where it does not belong, his alteration, which is really an improvement, seems ugly and incongruous, and is painted out. So of the builder who tries to change some vital portion of his building, without making a new plan which shall suit the change. He weakens and distorts the whole. So of the statesman who tries to alter his action in this or that affair without forming some clear, new policy in which the altered action shall have its reasonable, intelligible place. Everywhere the general design and the details belong together; and to attempt to put the new wine into bottles that are not new makes mischief. The general design is broken and loses even the symmetry and wholeness that it had before, and the detailed attempts result in nothing. "The bottles break, and the wine runneth out."

Let us think of one or two instances of this way in which a special resolution comes to nothing because it is embraced in no comprehensive, enveloping purpose of a new life. I am sure you will recognize what two or three instances only can suggest. A man is used to self-indulgence. That is the rule and purpose of his life. To do what gives him the most

pleasure—that is his only law. His living has been shaped by that ever since he was a mere boy. You know such men. It would be strange if, out of such a company as is gathered here, some of you were not such men. Your own indulgence, the greatest pleasure that you can get from living, is your rule of life. But something stops you at some special point. Some deed of self-denial which you see done seizes upon your imagination or your conscience and fascinates it. You take your self-indulgence at one point and subdue it. There is some one thing which goes against your convenience, which you resolve to do. There is some one satisfaction in which you delight, which you resolve to surrender.

Our history, as we look back upon it, is flecked and spotted all over with such resolutions. You make your resolution of self-sacrifice earnestly, but it stands all alone in your life. Never does it occur to you that your whole thought of life is wrong. Never do you think how the whole life ought to be self-devotion, how the noblest life, the true life, cannot be lived for a man's self, but must be counted only as belonging to one's brethren, must be consecrated as a whole. Into a plan of life all self-indulgent, this one self-sacrificing habit is set down; and when it dwindles and grows puny, wasting itself away and only worrying and exasperating the uncongenial life in which it stands, you wonder. You need not wonder. It is the weakness that belongs to every attempt to reform the details of living without conceiving a new plan of life.

You make a rule for yourself that you will visit

some poor people, teach in some charity school, work for some hospital. How dull and weary it grows by and by, when the novelty is worn away, unless you have begun by rising to the great conception that your life is not your own, that it belongs to God, and therefore that it belongs to God's children. Start out from that. Let that be your great habitual, controlling thought of life, and then your visit to the poor or to the hospital or to the school will come in simply as one utterance of this great consecrated life. It will be enshrined and preserved by all the thoughts and hopes of life about it. It will be like a tree growing in its native soil, not like a foreign plant set out in its own little flower-pot of earth in the midst of the great foreign desert.

Or, take the matter of honesty. Your law of life is not the law of truth. There is nothing in you of that high moral health which feels a falsehood just as the physical health feels a tremor of weakness or a sting of acute disease. Your life is false and unreal. But in the midst of your unreal life something sets you against one special act or kind of falsehood. Some circumstances reveal to you its meanness, and you feel that you would be ashamed to commit it. You resolve that that one special lie you will not tell; in that one point you will be honest. You fail. Your resolution goes to pieces. By and by you are false in that one guarded point, and why? Because this act of truth is guarded by no large, consistent law of truth. Imagine, if you can, that a sense of the wickedness and meanness of all falsehood had

taken possession of you. Imagine that by the knowledge of Christ the very spirit of truth had entered into you, so that to do or say the truth was your new nature; to do or say the false was utterly abhorrent to you. Then, how different it would have been! Each truthful act then would have been only a new flower on the great, healthy tree, only another natural effort of the new nature that is in you. It would not be then, as now, a single drop struggling against the stream, struggling up while the stream is all hurrying down; but a changed stream, with this one drop borne on its bosom to the end which it is all seeking.

Or, take again a business man's life. Two business men's conceptions may differ much about it all —what it is all for, this striving and wrestling and laboring for wealth. To one man it seems to be for the mere getting of the wealth—nothing beyond. To another man it seems to be for charity; in getting wealth, he may be able to give help and comfort to his fellow-men. Let those two men be stirred together to some charitable resolution, both together set to relieve some misery. Is not the result different? How, in the one life, this new impulse is all strange and foreign! How the mercenary merchant flutters and worries over his one act of charity! How, in the other life, it falls like the most natural and familiar thing, like one more snowflake dropped on the great white mountainside, which is preserved by finding itself at once with its own, where it belongs!

There is hardly anything sadder than to see a man

trying to do a single noble act in the midst of an ignoble conception, a low idea, of life. It is not an uncommon sight. Some cynic who has taught himself to think that life is all a fraud, some trifler who has persuaded himself that life is all a play, cannot escape the impulse to do some one generous, brave, earnest action, which implies that life is serious and real. It is contrary to all the cynic's or the trifler's theories of living. It finds no countenance in any of his other actions. He is ashamed of it and does it stealthily. Its freshness and vigorousness confuse all his daily composure. How like it is to what the figure of our text describes. A brave and generous deed has in it all the fire and life of new wine. It is full of ferment and disturbance. It is tumultuous with the very essence of the grape. It must have room to grow and to mature. It cannot be shut up. It must have a fresh, large life-idea to hold it. It must have room to work in; otherwise the life is all confused and broken by it. A hypocrite who is betrayed into one earnest word, a misanthrope who catches one strong clear glimpse of the dignity of man, a brutal employer who tries just at one point to be kind and gentle to his underlings,—all of these have the single effort crowded and hampered by the general spirit; and the struggle, after a little spasmodic heaving and restlessness, dies out and is lost.

Perhaps all this is truer about the religious life than anywhere else. For it would seem as if there were no place where men's good sense deserts them so utterly as where they need it most, in their re-

lationships to Him who requires our highest and completest service. But men make one religious resolution or take up some one religious habit. Men make up their minds that they will go to church. Men set apart some hour which shall always find them on their knees in prayer. Men determine that every day they will read a chapter of the Bible. The resolution is a good one, and has in it the power of great things. It has in it the crude and unripe essence of holiness. It is big even with the capacity of heaven.

But what does some man do? He takes that one religious resolution and sets it down into the midst of a perfectly unreligious life. That daily prayer to God, which implies a complete dependence on the Almighty strength, is flung into the midst of a day that is all hard with self-reliance. That reading of the Bible brings a stray idea of Christ and plants it into the most secular associations. The going to God's House is a solitary, exceptional act, right in the midst of a career that never otherwise goes up or looks up to God. What chance is there for such a resolution? What wonder if, before the year grows two months old, the prayer has dwindled to a moment's form, the Bible has become a wearisome book, the church a barren duty that will soon drop altogether, that any small excuse can easily dispense with! It is the commonest of sights. I doubt not many a prayer has been said and many a chapter read to-day, and there are many men and women in many a church from just that new sense of duty. It is clear enough what you need: some compre-

hensive reverence and faith into which these reverent and faithful acts may enter as its most natural expressions, and in which they shall be able to utter and develop their full life. You must begin by loving and fearing God, and then your several acts of love and fear will find their places and blossom into interest and delight.

So, my dear friends, what we want to plead for to-day is not primarily new resolutions. It is a new life. I hope that I have made you see the difference. You need a new conception of what you are living for, a new picture of the sort of life which it is worthy of a man to live. You must have this or your good resolutions surely come to nothing.

This is what is really meant by what puzzles us sometimes, as we find it in the Bible and in religious books—that the bad deed in a life that has a noble plan is not desperate, and that a good deed in a life that is set on evil scarcely gives us any encouragement or hope. David is very wicked in one instance, and yet God claims him for His own. Pharaoh and Judas feel some impulse of pity or repentance, but it is swallowed up and lost in the ungodliness and evil of their whole plan and thought of life. This seems to us strange at first. I hope that we begin to understand what a deep reason, what a true philosophy, is really at the bottom of it. The life rules the action as the stream rules its drops. That is the primary, the essential, need of a conversion. Before there really can be a new conduct there must be a new plan of life.

And how can that be? The master of a life really

is the plan of that life. He whom we serve really marks out for us the ambition which becomes our law. How simple, then, that makes it! If you want a new life you must have a new master. Not by sitting down and saying with yourself, "Now I will change. I will be reverent. I will not be selfish. I will make a high plan of life instead of a low one." Not that will change you. That comes to nothing. You must make Him your Master whom you can completely reverence, who can draw you away from your slavery to yourself, who can lift you to His own exaltation.

Men say, "Why do you always preach, 'Believe in and follow Christ?' Why not say always, 'Do this! Do that! Make this new habit! Leave off that old sin?' Why always faith? Why not always duty?" Because there can be no truly new habit without a truly new life, and there can be no new life without a new master. And there is no other master strong enough. There is no other name by which we can be saved but Christ's.

Again, men stand off and look at what Christians are doing, and they say: "How could I ever do such things as those? Can you think of me as praying? Can you imagine me praising God? My life will not hold this habit. It never can." No, surely; it never can; not this life, this worldliness, this selfishness, this sensuality. But there is a life more truly yours than this in which you live. If you will make Christ your Master, this new life shall open to you; and in it all these new, deep, bright habits shall enter and not seem strange,—new wine

in new bottles, the service of Christ in the faith of Christ.

Oh, let that new service come with the New Year —a new Master, a new life, and then new words and deeds and thoughts, new pleasures and new hopes, filling the years that you are yet to live here, and making them anticipations of the blessed New Year of Eternity.

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